New Zealand/Australia Conversation Database

Database	Context (Subgroup)	Age Range	# Samples	Location
NZ-AU Conversation	Con	NZ: 4;5 - 7;7 AU: 5;5 - 8;4	NZ: 248 AU: 102	New Zealand Australia

General Description

This database contains oral language samples collected from participants in a conversational context; a 10 minute conversation to elicit at least 50 complete and intelligible utterances.

New Zealand Participants

This language samples collected from New Zealand are from children aged 4;5 - 7;7. The samples were collected from the participants in a conversational context. The children were randomly selected from schools in Auckland, Hamilton, and Christchurch (major urban areas in New Zealand) as well as secondary urban areas surrounding Christchurch. Approximately 80% of the participants were from the Auckland/Hamilton region to reflect New Zealand's population density in these areas. Children with diagnosed disabilities were excluded from the sample. The schools reflected a range of socio-economic areas and English was the first language of all children included in the database. There was an even gender distribution. The ethnicity of the group is comprised of the following: New Zealand European: 62%, Maori: 22%, Pasifika 5%, Asian 3%, and Other 8%.

The Group Special Education speech-language therapists involved in the project were trained by one of the researchers on the assessment procedures and language sampling protocol. Each child was seen individually in the child's school setting and was administered a New Zealand speech and language screening test and reading or letter knowledge test to gain information regarding the child's general language development. Any child who performed very poorly on the receptive language screening task (i.e., could not follow basic instructions) was excluded from the database. Children's language samples were also excluded from the database for reasons such as poor recording quality and not engaging in the task (i.e., not willing to talk). Only samples that contained over 45 complete and intelligible utterances were included.

Australian Participants

Children, aged 5;5 - 8;4, were randomly selected from the first three years of primary school, grade 0 (Prep or Foundation Year), grade 1, and grade 2, across Queensland (regional: 55; City: 72), representing the full range of socio-economic areas (1 – 10).

Ethics approval for this project was granted by the University Human Ethics Committee (PES/31/12/HREC). Approval was also granted by the Department of Education and Training, Queensland Government (550/27/1258). Of the schools who agreed to participate, teachers were asked to identify children who 1) attended Foundation Year (known as Prep; YOS1), Year 1 (YOS2), or Year 2; YOS 3); 2) spoke English as their first language; 3) were progressing normally at school; and 4) had no history of speech and/or language impairments. Consent forms were sent home to these children via the teachers. From the children for whom consent to participate was obtained, participants were randomly selected, making sure there was an equal distribution of girls and boys, and an equal number

of participants across the three grades. Conversational language samples were elicited from 102 children, from grade 0 (n = 37), grade 1 (n = 32), and grade 2 (n = 33). There was an even gender distribution. These children were from the following ethnic backgrounds, as indicated by their parents on the project consent forms:

Australian (85.5%)
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (3.9%)
Pacific Island (.8%)
Other (3.1%)
Non-specified (6.3%)

A total of 21 speech pathologists assisted with the data collection. These therapists received a manual, observed a demonstration video, and attended a one-hour teleconference. Each child was seen individually in the child's school setting and was administered a range of oral language tasks. Children's language samples were excluded from the database if they contained less than 40 complete and intelligible utterances. For this reason 24 transcripts were discarded (see Westerveld & Vidler, 2014). As reported in Westerveld and Vidler, samples of less than 5 minutes' duration were 1.8 times more likely to contain fewer than 50 utterances.

Elicitation Procedures

The conversation protocol aimed to elicit 50 complete and intelligible utterances from the child in 10 minutes of conversation. The protocol was adapted from interview procedures described by Evans and Craig (1992). The child was asked to bring an object from the classroom to discuss with the examiner. The examiner encouraged the child to talk about the object. The child was then asked to talk about his or her family, school, and after-school activities. To establish and maintain a productive communicative interaction, the suggestions listed by Miller (1981) were followed. These included listening and following the child's lead, maintaining the child's pace, using open-ended prompts, and adding new information when appropriate.

Protocol

The child has been asked to bring an object from the classroom to show the examiner.
(10 minutes, use stopwatch)

Interview with the child. Respond to child with rewording of child's comments or "that's interesting, tell me some more about that." Try to avoid leading questions. Allow the child to take the lead. Start with the first question and introduce the remaining questions when appropriate.

"What did you bring to show me?" **Object discussed** _____
"Can you tell me about it?"
"Tell me about the sorts of things you do in the classroom".
"What do you like to do when you're not in school?"
"Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

Transcription Notes

The utterances were segmented into Communication Units (C-units). A C-unit includes an independent clause with its modifiers (Loban, 1976). All transcripts were timed and pauses, within and between utterances, of two or more seconds in length, were marked.

Coding Notes

- [EO:word] marks overgeneralization error
- [EP:word] marks pronoun error
- [EW] marks an extraneous or unnecessary word in the utterance that, if omitted, would make the utterance syntactically correct, e.g., C And he shout/ed and[EW] to the frog.
- [EW:word] marks other word-level error
- [EU] marks utterance-level error (*also marks utterances with 3 or more errors*)
- [FP] marks filled pause words such as *like*, e.g., *You (like[FP]) get six card/s.*

Database Selection Options

This database was created with two location options (New Zealand and Australia) and one ethnicity option (Maori). A language sample taken from a child can be compared against this population distribution as a whole or against a subset selected by location and/or including Maori (New Zealand) children only.

Using SALT to Compare Samples to the NZ-AU Conversation Database

Use SALT's Database menu to compare your sample with age or grade-matched samples selected from the NZ-AU Conversation database. SALT looks at the "+ Context" plus line in your transcript to determine which database to pre-select. To pre-select the NZ-AU Conversation database, include the following plus lines in your transcript:

+ Context: Con

When first creating a new transcript using the New Transcript Header information dialogue box:

- Click on the "browse" button in the lower right corner of the dialogue box to select database for comparison
- select NZ-AU Conversation.sltdb

Acknowledgements

The New Zealand databases are a result of the collaboration with Gail Gillon from the Department of Communication Disorders, University of Canterbury and Marleen Westerveld from Griffith University. Speech-language therapists from Group Special Education in Auckland, Hamilton, Christchurch, and Canterbury districts in New Zealand were involved in the collection of the language samples. The New Zealand Ministry of Education allowed the participation of Special Education speech-language therapists in the project. Financial assistance for the project was provided by the University of Canterbury, The Don Bevan Travel Scholarship, and the New Zealand Speech Language Therapists' Association.

The Australian databases are the result of a collaboration between Dr. Marleen Westerveld from Griffith University, and Kath Vidler and Jennifer Peach from the Department of Education, Training, and Employment, Queensland. Speech pathologists employed by the Department of Education, Training, and Employment across the State of Queensland were involved in the collection of the language samples. Financial assistance for the project was provided through a Griffith University Emerging Researcher Grant and by SALT Software LLC.