

## Mean Length of Communication Unit (MLCU)

MLCU is calculated using all utterances, including incomplete sentences, with the following exceptions:

Responses to questions and sentences that are interrupted or broken off.

Maze words (false starts, repeated words, fillers such as 'um,' 'uh,' etc.) (See the [Transcription](#) section of the ENNI Manual for the conventions for transcribing mazes in the SALT and CLAN programs.)

Utterances that are not story-related (e.g., unrelated statements or questions such as, "I dropped my barrette," or "I went to the beach last week.")

Story-enders, such as "the end" or "that's finished". These are not counted because they typically are short and may shorten the MLCU, and since not all children use them, the effect will not be uniform.

MLCU is calculated based on words, not morphemes. To calculate by hand, count all the words in the transcript except for maze words and words in excluded utterances, and divide the total by the number of included utterances. Remember to count both words in contracted utterances such as *I'm, you're, don't*.

To use SALT: Mark any line that you want to exclude from the count by added an equal sign (=) at the beginning of the line, before the letter indicating the speaker (e.g.: = C what about^). To get MLCU, select Analyses on the toolbar, and then Word and Morpheme Summary. MLU in Words and MLU in Morphemes will be listed on the chart. If you have used / to divide contractions such as *I'm, you're*, and so forth, then you must use MLU-Morphemes rather than words. Note that this will actually give you MLU in Words, counting each word in contractions, if you marked contractions but did not mark morpheme boundaries in the transcript. You should not have used / to mark bound morphemes, since these are not counted in MLCU. If you have transcribed contractions as two separate words (e.g., *I am, you are, do not*), you can use either MLU in Morphemes or in Words, since these will be identical.

To use CLAN: Again, you should not have marked morpheme boundaries in the transcript, and contractions should have been entered as two words, as described in the [Transcription](#) section of the ENNI Manual. Mark any line that you do not want to include in the count by added [+ bch] to the end of the line before the punctuation. The command for MLU without maze words is:

MLU -s"[+ bch]" \_\_\_\_\_.cha [the name of the transcript file goes in the blank]

