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Personal Narratives
Across Diverse
Cultures

Guest Editor:
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Applying a Multi-Level Coding System
to Children's Personal Narratives

Marleen Westerveld, PhD

Moderated by:
Amy Hansen, MA, CCC-SLP, Managing Editor, SpeechPathology.com



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Applying a Multi-Level Coding System to Children's Personal Narratives

Marleen Westerveld, PhD, MSPA, CPSP

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Language Disorders

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Financial: Maureen Westerveld has a financial relationship with SALT language analysis software. She has authored books, chapters and articles on this topic. Nonfinancial: Maureen is the editor for Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, and Chair of the Child Language Committee of the International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders (IALP).
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Learning Outcomes

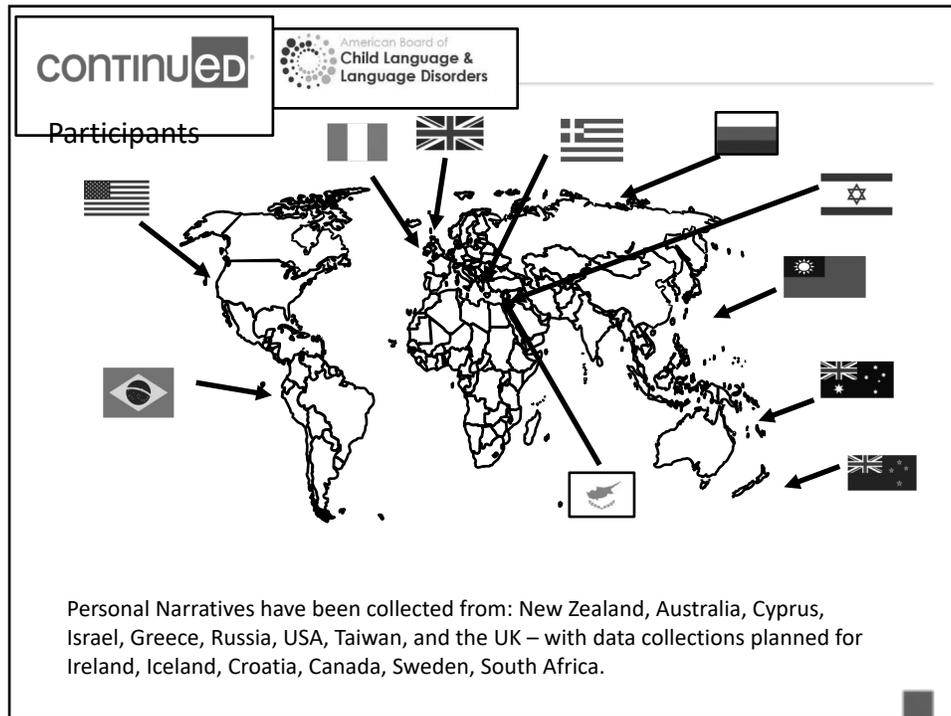
After this course, participants will be able to:

- Explain the importance of eliciting personal narratives as part of SLPs' routine assessment of language performance in children and adolescents.
- Describe how to elicit personal narratives using the Global TALES protocol.
- Describe how to analyze personal narratives on measures of global coherence, narrative elements and types of evaluation.

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Global TALES project

- Child Language Committee (IALP)
- >10 countries / >5 languages



Why personal narratives?

- *Descriptions of past events experienced by the speaker*
- Develop from an early age
- Majority of conversations of children ages 5-11 years involve personal narratives
- Important for classroom participation
- Competence is critical for socio-emotional wellbeing and identity development

Why?

Q1

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Critical relationship

```
graph TD; A[Social interactions] --> B[Conversations]; B --> C[Telling stories]; C --> A;
```

Q2

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Cultural influences

- Personal narratives reflect the cultural style of their community
- Quality of reminiscing experiences during childhood ~ development of personal narratives
- Differences in personal narrative structure between cultures
- Language itself may relate to the structure of the personal narrative (local and global level)

Bliss & McCabe (2008)

Language Skills of 10-year-olds

- Narratives in the curriculum (Milosky, 1987)
- Strong research focus on fictional narratives
 - But what about personal narratives?
- Construction-integration model
- Interpretation is influenced by personal knowledge and experiences
- Important for making text-to-self connections

Assessment

- Retelling vs Generation ?
- Recounts vs Accounts ?
- Using specific 'starter' prompts, including conversational maps or topic prompts
- We must be careful to create a culturally neutral protocol for eliciting personal narratives from 10-year-olds

Standard protocol

- Verbal prompts (no pictures)
- Asking children to ‘tell a story’
- Using topics that may appeal/be recognizable to children across the globe: feelings/mental states/emotions
- Using neutral sub-prompts
- Providing the children with 6 topics
- Using a standard protocol – translated into different languages

Q3/Q4

6 prompts

1. Tell me a story about a time when you felt excited, or really happy.
2. Tell me a story about a time when you felt worried or confused. Perhaps a time when lots of things were happening and you didn't know what to do.
5. Tell me a story about a time when you had a **problem** and you had to fix it. Tell me all about what happened and what you had to do to fix it.
Tell me all about what happened and what you had to do to fix it.
6. Tell me a story about something that has happened to you that was very important to you.

Full details will be registered with OSF (Open Science Foundation)

Q5

continued



Global Tales demo video



https://youtu.be/wikrK2rK_9M

continued



But what about analysis?

- What language skills do children need/use?
- What makes a 'good' story?
- What do children talk about?
- How do children express their 'emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and affect' – i.e. why it mattered?
- How can we do this reliably across cultures/languages?

continued




Example S24

C when I broke my arm.

C when I broke my arm I did a slide tackle (umm) someone.

C and (they p*) they went up once I had broken my arm.

C and I came back to school the next day.

C the person that broke my arm didn't really say sorry.

C and I had to (like)>

C oh he was laughing.

C and so I was really annoyed with that.




Example

C so I had to (like try to be) try to control my anger.

C and what I had to do to fix it was (I had to) >

C so they wouldn't say sorry properly so I had to forgive them (like) without them saying sorry which was really annoying because they didn't even say sorry.

... continues



Multiple ways

1. Microstructure
2. Macrostructure
3. Topics and themes
4. Evaluation types

Multiple ways

1. Microstructure:
 - a) How long is the narrative? (Utterances [C-Units] and total number of words)
 - b) How grammatically complex? (MLU in words)
 - c) How semantically diverse? (NDW)

All samples were transcribed in SALT and measures were calculated automatically

S24: 18 utterances; MLU: 11; TNW: 196; NDW: 88





Multiple ways

2. Macrostructure: Story Grammar (Gillam et al. 2017)

1. Characters
2. Setting
3. Problem (initiating event)
4. Internal Response
5. Plan
6. Action
7. Consequence
8. Conclusion

https://cdn-links.lww.com/permalink/tld/a/tld_2015_12_07_sandra_1500023_sdc2.pdf

Q6





S24

Scoring: 0 (absent), 1 (minimal), 2 (meets standard criteria), 3 (elaborated/complex) points awarded per element

	Points	Examples from the story
Character	1	“Someone” – not named
Setting	2	When I broke my arm...when I came to school the next day.
Initiating event	2	The person that broke my arm didn't really say sorry and he was laughing.
Internal response	2	I was really annoyed with that.
Plan	1	I had to try to control my anger.
Action / attempt	2	I had to forgive them without them saying sorry. I had to forgive him for two things.
Consequence	0	
Conclusion / closure	2	I was really annoyed





Multiple ways

3. Topics and themes
4. Evaluation Types (Peterson & McCabe, 1983).
 - 17 codes, including mental state verbs, intensifiers, modifiers, repetitions, negatives, dialogue, compulsion





Exclamations [EXCLAM]	Mental states [MENT]
Repetitions [REPET]	Hypotheses [HYPOTH]
Compulsion words [COMPULS]	Causal explanations [CAUS]
Figurative language [FIG]	Judgments [JUDG]
Intensifier [INTENS]	Emotional states [EMOT]
Modifiers [MOD]	Tangential info [TANG]
Exaggeration [EXAG]	Dialogue [DIAL]
Negatives [NEG]	Words per se [WPS]
Intentions or desires [INTENT]	

Adapted From: Peterson, C., & McCabe, A. (1983). *Developmental psycholinguistics: Three ways of looking at a child's narrative*. New York: Plenum





(Bruner, 1986, p. 14)

“two landscapes simultaneously”

Landscape of action	Landscape of consciousness
<p>“constituents are the arguments of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agent ▪ Intention or Goal ▪ Situation ▪ Instrument ▪ Something <p>corresponding to a ‘story grammar’”</p>	<p>“what those involved in the action —</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Know ▪ Think or ▪ Feel or ▪ Do not know, think, or feel”

“The two landscapes are essential and distinct.”





Action:	Consciousness:
<p>overt goals and actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Compulsion ▪ Intensifiers ▪ Modifiers ▪ Exaggeration ▪ Intent ▪ Causality ▪ Dialogue 	<p>covert feelings and thinking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negation ▪ Mental state verbs ▪ Hypothesis ▪ Emotional

Not included: exclamation, repetition, figurative judgement,




Example 1 (M)

C when I broke my arm.

C when I broke my arm I did a slide[MOD] tackle (umm) someone.

C and (they p*) they went up once I had broken my arm.

C and I came back to school the next day.

C the person that broke my arm didn't[NEG] really[INTENS] say sorry.

C and I had[COMPULS] to (like)>

C oh he was laughing.

C and so I was really[INTENS] annoyed[EMOT] with that [CAUS].

Q7




Example 1

C so I had[COMPULS] to (like try to be) try[INTENT] to control my anger[EMOT].

C and what I had[COMPULS] to do to fix it was (I had to) >

C so they wouldn't[NEG] say sorry properly so I had[COMPULS] to forgive them (like) without them saying sorry [CAUS] which was really[INTENS] annoying[EMOT] because they didn't[NEG] even[INTENS] say sorry [CAUS][JUDG].

... continues

continued  **Example 2 (F)**

C (um) one time I wrecked[WPS] my sister's dress[JUDG].

C and I was told to try and mend it [DIAL].

C so I just[INTENS] ended up glueing [CAUS]>

C 'cos I was pretty[INTENS] young I put glue on a piece of paper I think[MENT] [CAUS] 'cos there was a rip down the side [CAUS].

C so I put glue on the paper [CAUS]

C it was a coloured[MOD] paper[TANG].

C I think[MENT] it was a pink[MOD] dress and a pink[MOD] piece of paper [TANG].

C and I just[INTENS] glued it on. **Q8**

continued  **Example 2**

C and said here you go {laughs} [DIAL].

E {laughs}.

C and (um) she thought[MENT] it was hilarious [JUDG] 'cos (sh*) I think[MENT] she was five and I was three or something [CAUS].

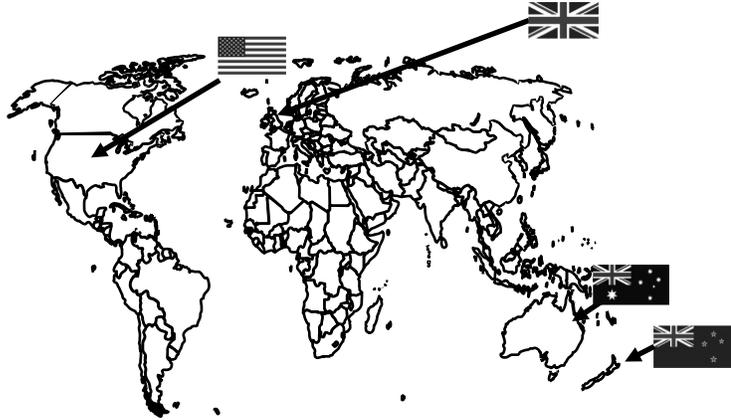
C and then I took it to dad.

C and he said oh what a good[MOD] job but I think[MENT] I might (um) ask if your mum can fix it instead 'cos I don't[NEG] think[MENT] this will stay on for very[INTENS] long[HYPOTH] [CAUS][DIAL].

C It was pretty[INTENS] funny[JUDG].

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Our Pilot Project



A world map with arrows pointing to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Each arrow is accompanied by the flag of the respective country.

continued[®] American Board of
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Background

- Why look at the English speaking countries separately initially?
 - Reduce some challenges of inter-linguistic coding
 - Translation
 - Reliability
 - Evaluate analysis techniques with less influence of linguistic difference





Research Question

Are there differences in performance between children from four English speaking countries on measures of:

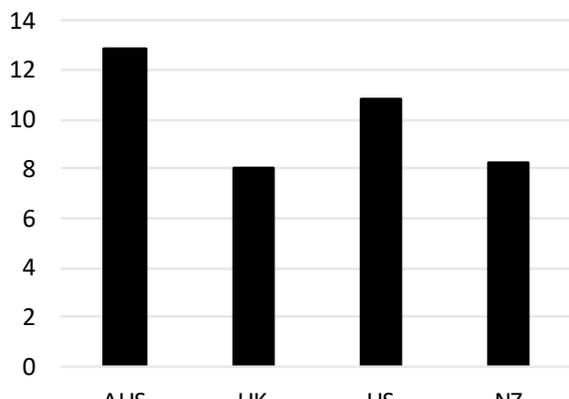
- Microstructure variables
- Macrostructure (SG)
- Evaluation codes
- (Themes)



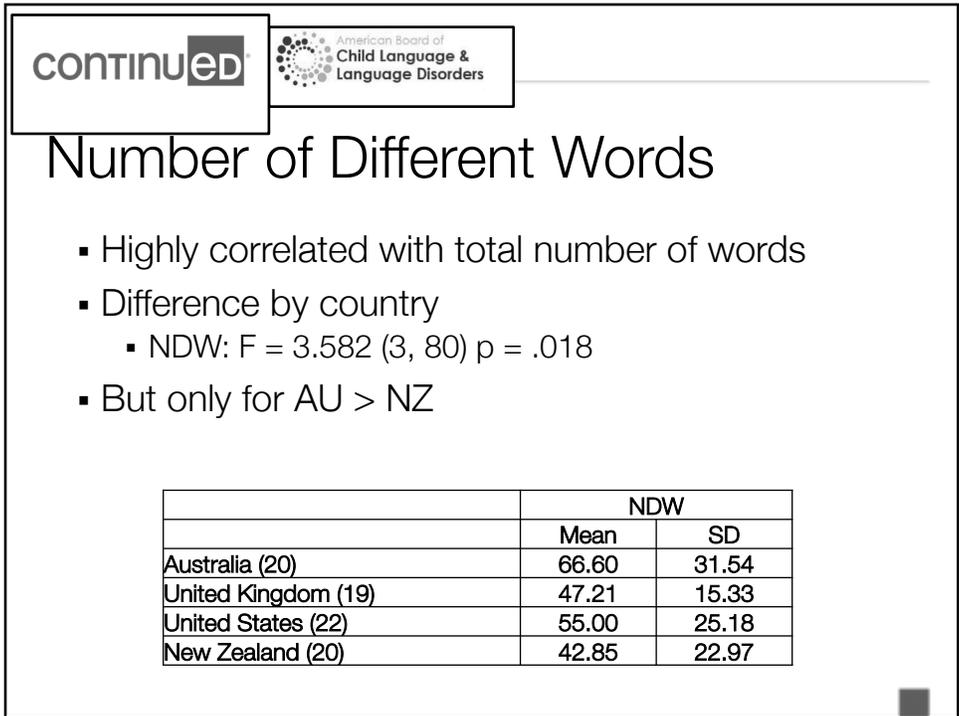
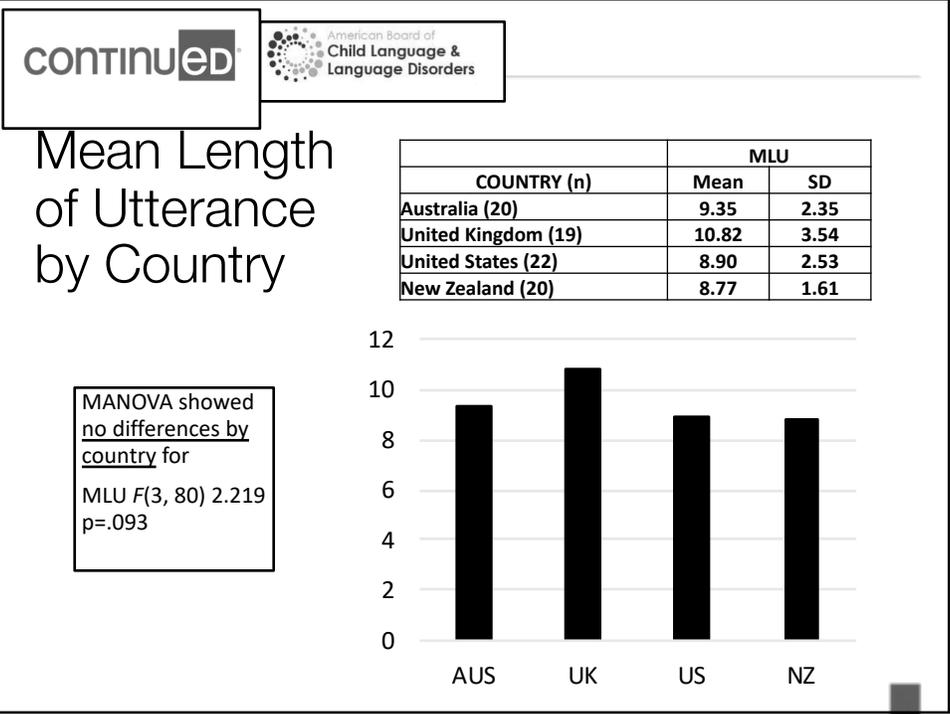


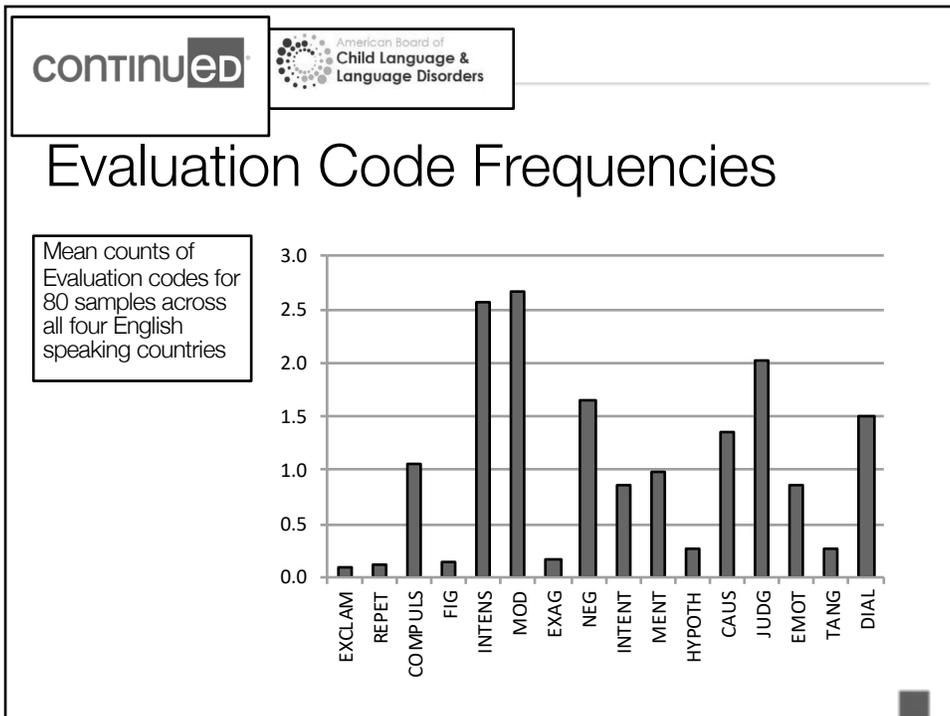
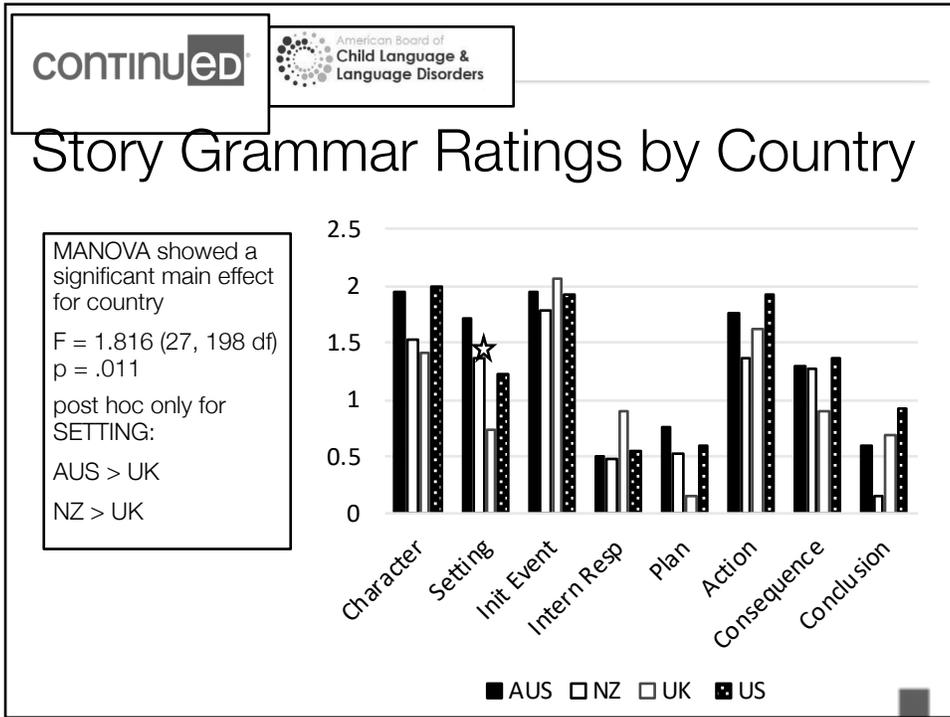
Mean Total Utterances by Country

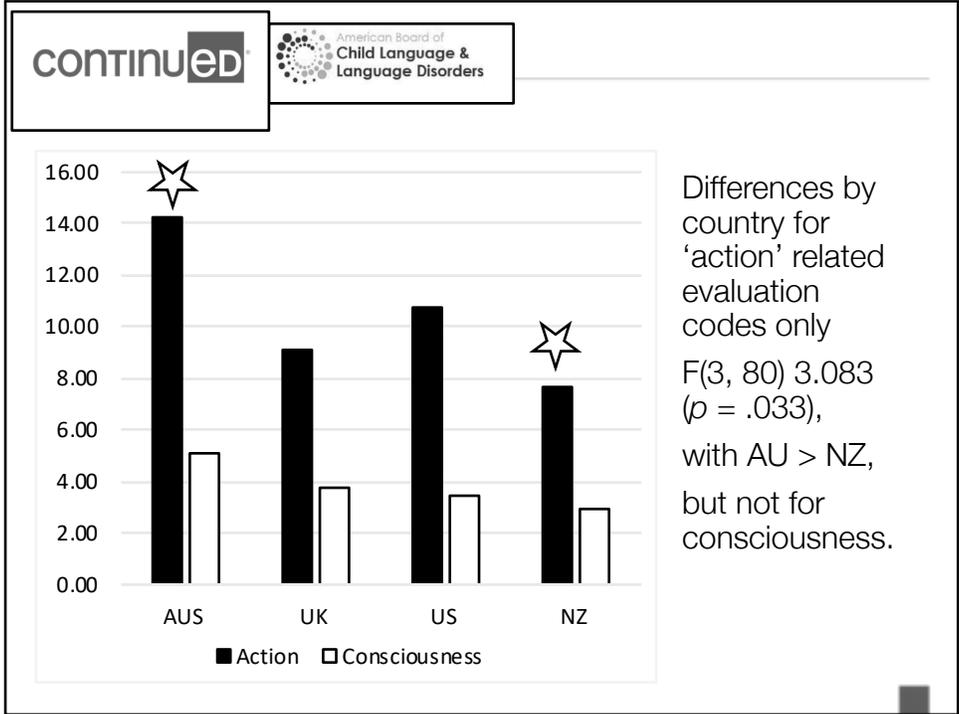
COUNTRY (n)	Tot Utt in C-units	
	Mean	SD
Australia (20)	12.85	6.81
United Kingdom (19)	8.05	4.31
United States (22)	10.82	6.56
New Zealand (20)	8.20	6.35



MANOVA showed no differences by country for TotUtt $F(3, 80)$ 2.614 $p=.058$







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Conclusions

- The protocol is feasible and elicits spoken language from 10-year-olds around the world
- The samples are short and linguistically dense
- At microstructure level: similarities across countries esp. MLU in words
- At macrostructure level: SG coding seems promising with great potential for clinical practice across countries, languages, and cultures
- Differences in performance between countries may be related to the types of evaluation: action vs consciousness
- Despite similarities, differences in themes were found

Q9/Q10

Future directions

- Do the participants (n = 20) represent their country? AU samples?
- Tighten reliability for coding of evaluation codes
- Data collection planned for other countries
- May want to investigate sensitivity to age, year of schooling

Further information

Visit my website: www.marleenwesterveld.com
to download elicitation materials and access
publications.

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