

# Mean Length of Utterance in Bengali Speaking Mentally Retarded Children

**Pitu. N**

Student, A.I.I.S.H, Mysore

The present study was aimed at determining the mean length of utterance and syntactic complexity in the speech of groups of normals and the mentally retarded population, in the age range of 5-12 years. 20 normal children and 10 mentally retarded children (5 mild and 5 moderately retarded) with IQ range of 40-66 with mean IQ of 53.3 were studied. A language sample consisting of spontaneous and narrated/elicited utterances was recorded from each of the 30 children. 100 utterance of each subject were analyzed for mean length of utterance and syntactic complexity. Mean length was calculated in terms of both words and morphemes. Syntactic complexity was assessed with reference to the frequency of different lexical categories, order and arrangements of these lexical categories in the utterances and the number of compound word usage for both the groups.

Following conclusions were drawn from the results:

1. As expected, the mean length of utterance in morphemes was higher than that of mean length of utterance in words for both the normals and the retarded children.
2. A positive relationship between IQ and MLU was seen in the mentally retarded group when considered as a whole, as well as when mild and moderate groups were considered separately. MLU decreased with the decrease in the IQ as it was seen in the mild and moderately retarded groups.
3. No significant relationship between age and MLU in the normals was found.
4. Speech and language delay and deficits were observed in both the mild and moderately retarded group in the present study.
5. There is a difference in terms of usage of grammatical categories in the mildly and moderately retarded group.
6. In the mentally retarded though all the grammatical categories were acquired, it was not used to their maximum potential i.e. they were not found in same percentage of occurrence as found in normals.
- 7.. The overall pattern of language in the mentally retarded population follow the normal trend with few individual quantitative and qualitative differences.
8. Misarticulations, slurred speech, repetitions, and simplification of grammatical structures were seen in the mentally retarded group and they were found more in moderately retarded group than in the mildly retarded.