

your first childes search -- step by step:

1. look through the available data, and decide which dataset you want to start your analysis with.

steps:

- visit <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/manuals/> (for ms word documents) or [http://courses.umass.edu/ling510/lab\\_materials/childes\\_database/](http://courses.umass.edu/ling510/lab_materials/childes_database/) (corresponding pdf files)
- start by looking at the summary of available data for the language(s) you are interested in.  
are you interested in a longitudinal study (follow a child/children over a longer period of time, typically smaller N (number of participants)) or do you want to look at differences among children at a particular age group?  
(for today, we'll use the data by Jacqueline Sachs, one child from 1 to 5)

2. get things set up on your computer

steps:

- download the data (under <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/data/> go to zipped transcripts)
- unpack the file into a dedicated directory on your computer (for instance create a folder childes with a subfolder data on your desktop and put them there). (you might need a program to "unzip" the data, f.i. winzip – usually something should be installed on your computer already, but let me know if you need more info on the details here.)
- download the clan program from the childes website at <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/clan/> and install it according to their directions. also maybe save a copy of the clan manual, which you can find here <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/manuals/CLAN.pdf>
- start the clan program

- inform the program where the various files you will work with are. you do that by clicking on the buttons "working" and "output" in the clan window. for "working" select the directory in which you unpacked the data, for instance childes\data\Sachs\ on your desktop. For "output" select the folder in which you want to save output files, for instance childes\ on your desktop. you probably don't need to change "lib" or "more lib".

3. get started

steps:

- now it's time for your first search:
  1. select a command, say "freq" for frequency counts.
  2. select the files you want to search in: click on the "file in" button, and add all the files you are interested in from the left hand window to the right hand window. lets look at all files corresponding to the age under two for now. those are n01.ch – n34.cha. (you can use the wildcard \* which matches any string in the "filter" window to simplify adding files. f.i. filter for n0\*.cha and add all, then n1\*.cha, n2\*.cha, and finally add the last five individually). you will see an @ symbol in the command window, which means "use all the files in the list".
  3. specify additional restrictions, f.i. +t\*CHI (only child utterances) or +s\*ing (contains a string ending in "ing")
  4. run your search

4. check your results

- it's important to check if you found what you were looking for! you can look through the .cha files on your computer (they are just text files, so you can use notepad f.i. – just make sure not to accidentally save them) or you can view them online at <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/data/> under "browsable transcripts".

5. refine your search

- repeat steps 4 and 5 until your search matches exactly what you had in mind