

## Abstract

We examined how book sharing practices of American and Thai mother-preschooler dyads are influenced by linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Twenty-one Thai monolingual mother-preschooler dyads and 21 American-English monolingual mother-preschooler dyads completed a book sharing task. Narrative samples revealed communicative differences between the American and Thai groups. We conclude that linguistic and cultural norms influence mother-child interactions and that children exhibit culture-specific communicative styles as early as the preschool years.

## Introduction

- Children acquire language through interactions with more competent social partners, usually their parents (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978).
- One common context of mother-child interaction that has been shown to promote children's language and literacy skills is joint book reading (e.g., Fletcher & Reese, 2005).
- The nature of maternal language input that children receive during this activity is variable across different cultures (e.g., Luo et al., 2014; Murase et al., 2005).

## Research Questions

1. How do Thai and American-English monolingual (a) mothers and (b) children differ in their communicative styles during book sharing?
  - e.g., do mothers differ in their use of attention directives or affirmations?
2. What is the relationship between maternal and child communicative styles during book sharing?
  - e.g., are maternal and child length of conversation correlated?



Permission to use picture was obtained

## Participants

	American-English monolingual mean (SE)	Thai monolingual mean (SE)	p-value
Children			
N (girl:boy)	21 (10:11)	21 (11:10)	-
Age (months)	52.43 (0.82)	53.19 (0.97)	0.55
Mothers			
N	21	21	-
Age (years)	37.16 (1.20)	37.66 (0.95)	0.74
Education (years)	18.00 (0.77)	18.55 (0.67)	0.59
Fathers			
N	21	21	-
Age (years)	39.01 (1.36)	40.03 (1.12)	0.56
Education (years)	18.09 (0.80)	18.92 (1.93)	0.40

Inclusionary criteria were based on the *Language Experience and Proficiency Questionnaire* (Marian, Blumenfeld, & Kaushanskaya, 2007):

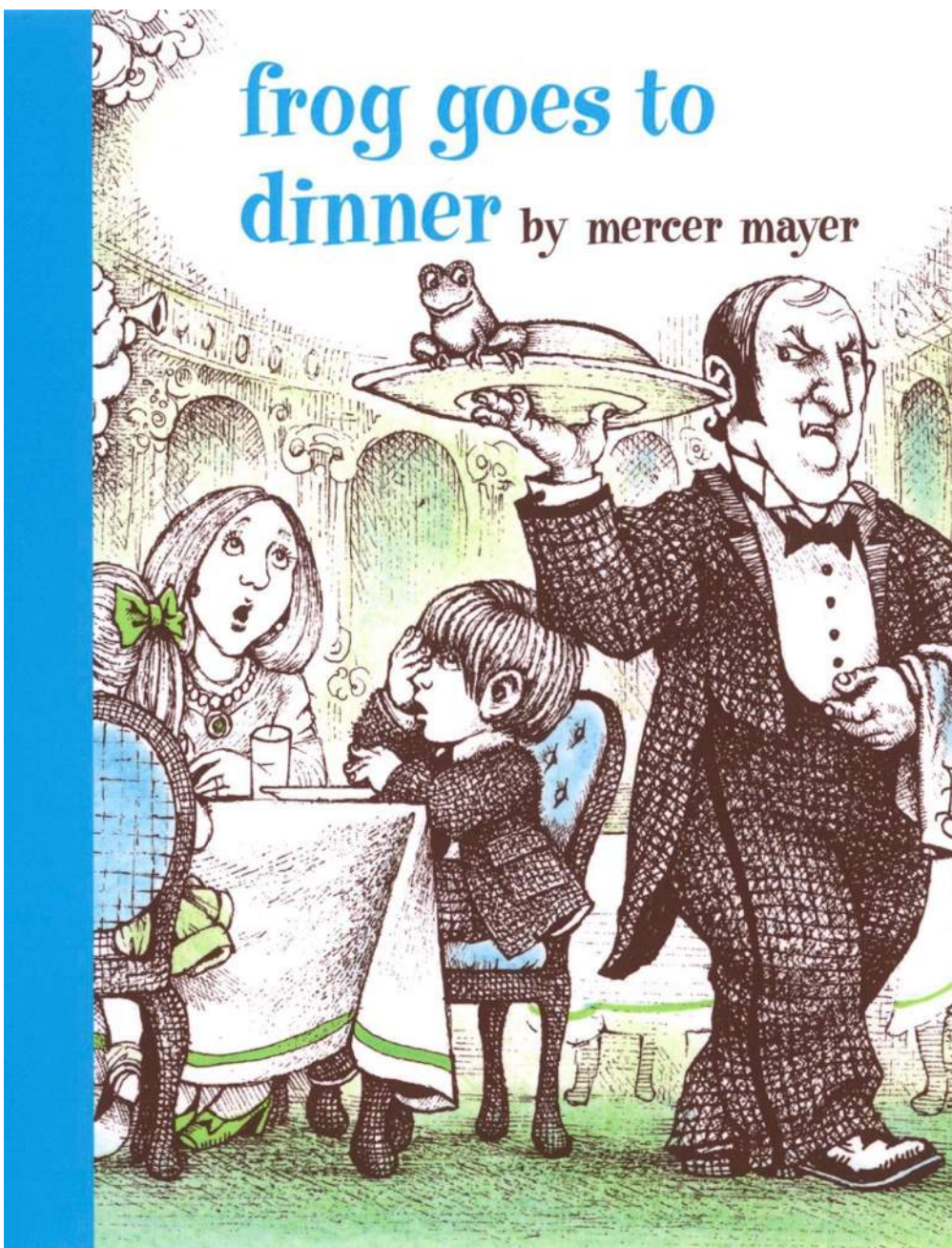
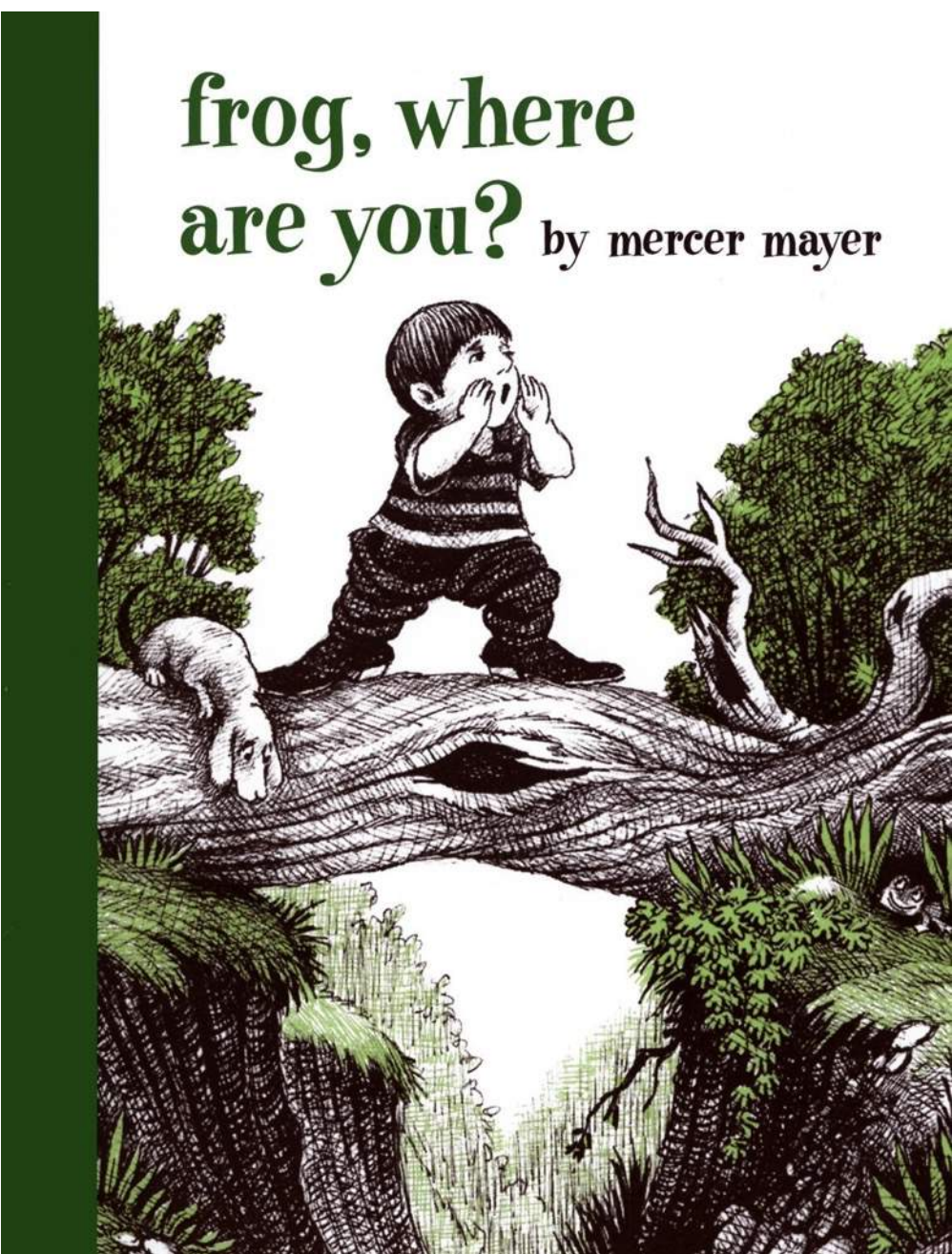
1. Current exposure to L2 (if any)  $\leq 20\%$ ; AND
2. Proficiency in L2 (if any)  $\leq 5$  (0-10 scale).

## Procedure

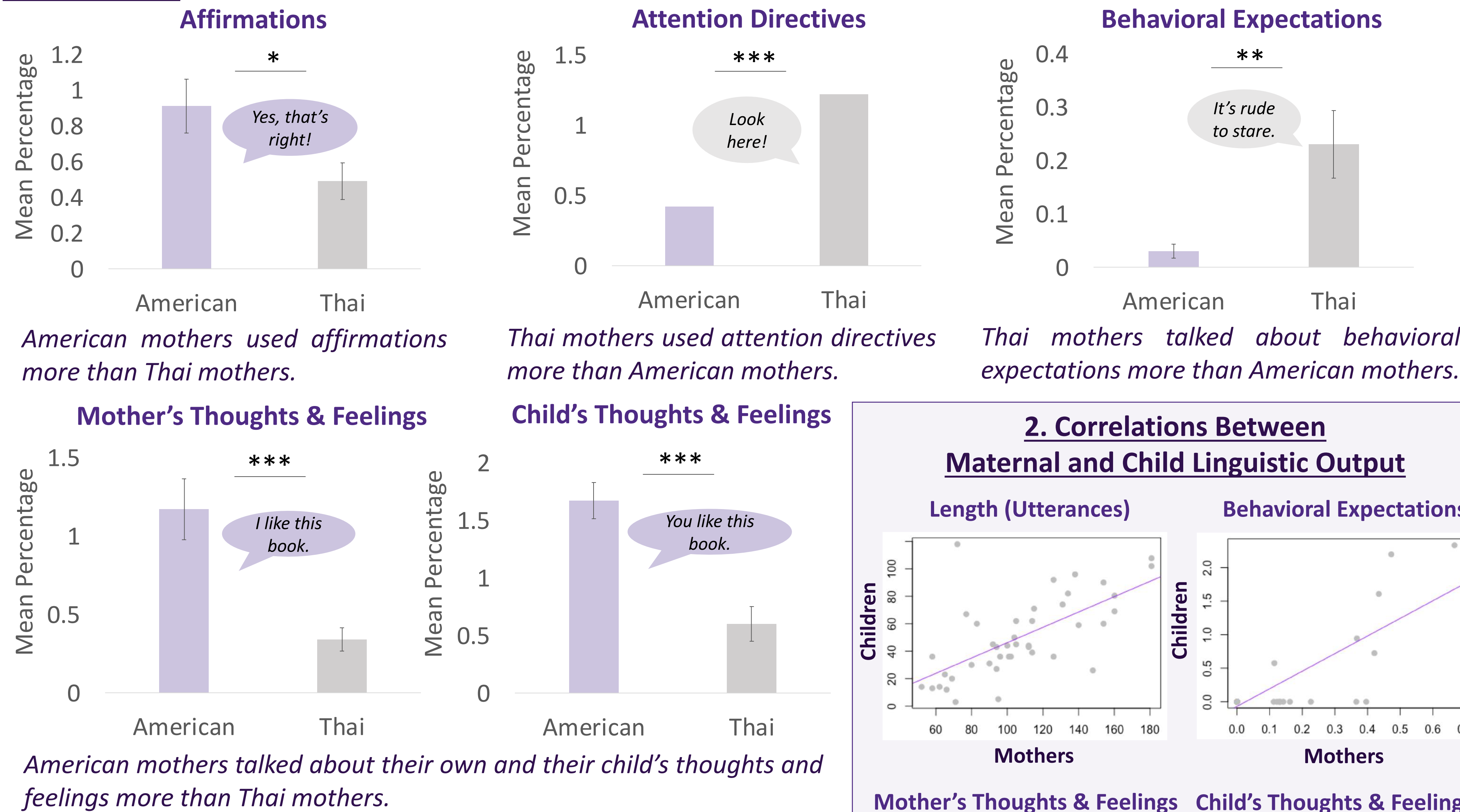
- Dyads completed a book sharing task in their homes, which consisted of mothers telling a story and engaging their child in conversation using one of two wordless picture books.
- Half of the dyads in each group shared *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969), while the other half shared *Frog goes to dinner* (Mayer, 1974).
- Interactions were video-recorded.
- Recordings were transcribed using Codes for the Analysis of Human Language (CHAT), available through the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES; MacWhinney, 2000), and coded by native Thai and English speakers.
- For data analysis, mean percentage was calculated by dividing total frequency of each measure by total number of utterances, to account for differences in length of conversation.

## Methods

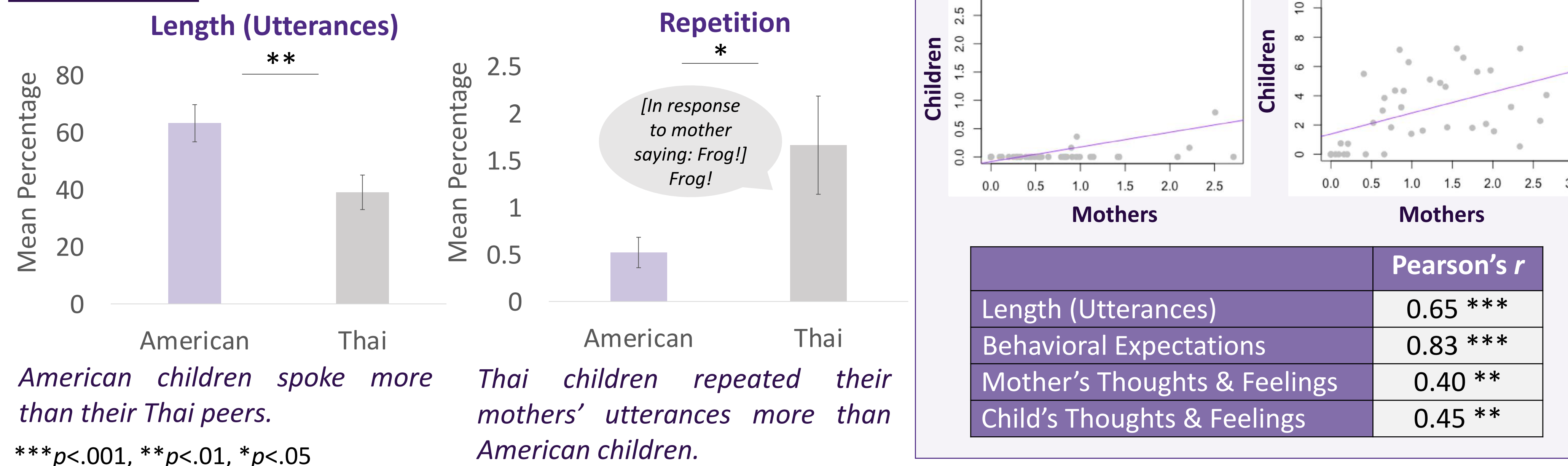
## Stimuli



## 1. (a) Mothers



## 1. (b) Children



## Discussion

- Fewer utterances but more repetition produced by Thai children compared to American children may indicate differences in the child's expected role during book reading (i.e., audience versus co-constructor; Melzi & Caspe, 2005).
- Greater use of affirmations and discussion of thoughts and feelings by American mothers compared to Thai mothers, and greater use of attention directives and discussion of behavioral expectations by Thai mothers compared to American mothers may be indicative of differences in individualistic and collectivist cultural values (Mullen & Yi, 1995; Winskel, 2010).
- Associations between maternal and child book sharing patterns suggest that by interacting with more competent social partners, children start to internalize culture-specific communicative styles and learn to use them appropriately.

## Conclusion

American and Thai mother-child dyads exhibit distinct book sharing practices, which reflect culture-specific socialization goals.