Developing a new procedure for assessing communication in severe aphasia: The Famous People Protocol

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Background
Only the Boston Assessment of Severe Aphasia (BASA, Helm-Estabrooks et al., 1989) measures its extent and variation in performance in people with severe aphasia.

No systematic measure looks beyond limitations on language to describe how individuals with aphasia convey their knowledge and competence.

The Famous People Protocol (FPP) is our attempt to provide such a measure.

Goals
1. To determine what an individual knows about a topic and how he or she communicates that knowledge when speech is moderately to severely impaired.
2. To provide clinicians with a tool for observing how their clients both use— and can be encouraged to use—strategies to communicate their knowledge via Supported Conversation (Kagan, 1998) and Conversational Coaching (Hopper, Holland & Rewega, 2002).

Developing FPP
Approximately 30 speakers with aphasia, and 15 comparison persons participated in pilot testing, to choose a group of photographs of famous people that were recognized by a majority of them.

These individuals represented a spectrum of ages and education levels. Final stimuli comprised photographs of 24 famous people: easily recognized entertainers, world and sports figures, a selection US Presidents and 28 related questions answerable by one or two words.

Scoring uses a 4-point system—total possible score 100:
1 point: answering 3 yes/no questions correctly
2 points: answering 3 yes/no questions correctly and 4 point no recognition, or failure to communicate it
3 points: naming, or providing cues:
movie star, husband…mary…White/Shoulders…Diamonds
2 points: a) finishing experimenter cue “Elizabeth”— with “Taylor”, b) providing inexact but relevant cues…’star, friend Michael’...
1 point answering 3 relevant questions correctly
Did she have a lot of husbands? Is she Elizabeth Taylor?

The FPP is a potential tool that will permit further exploration of the neuroanatomy of these strengths.

Clinicians and supportive others might use approaches such as these to find useful ways to exploit strengths of PWAs, however minimal.

REFERENCES

Appendix
FPP is available for downloading as follows:
Go to TalkBank.org
Follow link to AphasiaBank
Follow link to Browsable Database
Follow link to English
Follow link to Famous Websites SCALE, Whiteside, & Wozniak contain videos of a majority of the finalized protocol. Others are pilot versions.

The videotapes with the designations dated 2013 represent the final version of FPP. Previous FPPs are to be considered exploratory.

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The final version of FPP was put on the AphasiaBank website in June, 2013.

This includes photographs in both Kaynole (Mac) and Powerpoint presentation modes, along with scoring instructions and guidelines.

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The immediate goal of AphasiaBank is construction of a shared database of multimedia interactions for the study of communication in aphasia. The ultimate goal of this work is the improvement of evidence-based therapy for aphasia.