

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION THROUGH SUCCESSFUL REPAIR: EXAMINING FLUENCY AND MECHANISMS FOR SYNTACTIC PROGRESS IN APHASIC AND NON-APHASIC SPEECH

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Abstract

The fields of Rhetoric and Communication usually assume a competent speaker who is able to speak well with conscious intent; however, what happens when intent and comprehension are intact but communicative facilities are impaired (e.g., by stroke or traumatic brain injury)? What might a focus on communicative success be able to tell us in those instances? This project considers this question in examining communication disorders through identifying and analyzing patterns of (dis) fluent speech between 10 aphasic and 10 non-aphasic adults. The analysis in this report is centered on a collection of data provided by the Aphasia Bank database. The database's collection protocol guides aphasic and non-aphasic participants through a series of language assessments, and for my re-analysis of the database's transcripts I consider communicative success is and how it is demonstrated during a re-telling of the Cinderella narrative. I conducted a thorough examination of a set of participant transcripts to understand the contexts in which speech errors occur, and how (dis) fluencies may follow from aphasic and non-aphasic participant's speech patterns. An inductive mixed-methods approach, informed by grounded theory, qualitative, and linguistic analyses of the transcripts functioned as a means to balance the classification of data, providing a foundation for all sampling decisions. A close examination of the transcripts and the codes of the Aphasia Bank database suggest that while the coding is abundant and detailed, that further levels of coding and analysis may be needed to reveal underlying similarities and differences in aphasic vs. non-aphasic linguistic behavior. Through

four successive levels of increasingly detailed analysis, I found that patterns of repair by aphasics and non-aphasics differed primarily in degree rather than kind. This finding may have therapeutic impact, in reassuring aphasics that they are on the right track to achieving communicative fluency.

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