

Rathnayake, S. P.,
Shadden, Barbara B.,
Chang, Thasi,
POSTER

Comparison of Meanings in Discourse among the Sinhala Speaking Aphasic and Non-aphasic Individuals

S. P.Rathnayake, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya

Barbara B. Shadden, Program in Communication Disorders, University of Arkansas, USA

Thasi Chang, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo

Background: Aphasia is an acquired communication disorder that affects the individual's use of language at all levels including the use of discourse. Aphasia can be diagnosed using clinical language assessment tools. In a language when the syntactic structure is flexible, the language errors could be more evident at discourse level than at sentence level (Markenzie, 2000). Therefore, aphasia can be identified with discourse analysis in Sinhala, particularly the colloquial variety.

Objective: To identify how mental (M), material (MT) ,verbal (V) and relational (R) types of meanings are distributed in the discourse of Sinhala-speaking non-aphasic (NA) and aphasic (A) individuals.

Methodology: 10 (05 Aphasics and 05 Non-Aphasics) participants were selected using purposive sampling within the age range of 36-78 yrs. Data was obtained via checklists and interviews on narrative, descriptive, conversational and procedural discourse. Each discourse was analyzed according to the meaning types of M, MT,V, and R. Data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Results: Marked differences were observed between aphasia and non-aphasia discourse types. Among 04 meanings types the Material (A- 17.5, NA-54.8) and Relational (A-10.2,NA-40.2) functions were higher in both groups . Although the meaning types of Verbal and Mental functions were less common, with guided questions, all non-aphasics were able to add utterances with guided questions, but non-aphasics were unable to increase their utterances with guided questions.

Among 05 participants with aphasia, marked variation was observed in discourse meaning types, as Material ranged from 0 - 5.5, Relational from 0 - 5, Verbal from 0 -.0.5 and Mental meaning from 0 - 0.2. Further, total number of utterances ranged from 01 to 64.

Conclusion: Discourse meaning types can be useful in diagnosing aphasia as there is clear variation among aphasia compared to non-aphasia as well as within the group of aphasic individuals.