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A comparison of three discourse elicitation methods in aphasia and age-matched adults: implications for language assessment and outcome

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Background and Purpose:

- Discourse analysis is commonly used to assess language ability and to evaluate language change following intervention in aphasia.
- Despite emphasis on collecting and analyzing many samples of discourse per subject, assessment and analysis time are often limited. Therefore, identifying the prompts that best exemplify parts of the language system under study is necessary.

Here, we identify differences in language produced during different discourse tasks in speakers with (N=90) and without (N=84) aphasia

Methods: Four structured discourse tasks were evaluated in a group of speakers with aphasia and an age- and education- matched control group from AphasiaBank[2]. Primary linguistic variables which served as proxies for various language abilities (see Fig)[3]

Analysis: Using a series of repeated measures ANCOVAs, with significantly correlated demographic and descriptive variables as covariates, main effects of discourse type were evaluated. Post hoc tests were evaluated for significant models.

Results: Despite an impoverished output from the aphasia group, there was a main effect of discourse type on most primary linguistic variables in both groups, such that each discourse type taxed components of the spoken language system to varying extents, e.g.:

- Narrative discourse produced speech highest in propositional density (Figure, right)
- Procedural discourse produced the fewest verbs per utterance (Figure, right)

1. **Discourse prompts tax the language system in different ways**
2. **Collecting & analyzing several discourse samples across prompts when time is available**
3. **Selecting the most sensitive discourse prompt when evaluating specific language abilities and outcomes**