

Cambridge University Press  
0521810752 - Schizophrenic Speech: Making Sense of Bathrooms and Ponds that Fall in Doorways  
Peter J. McKenna and Tomasina M. Oh  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# Schizophrenic Speech

Making Sense of Bathrooms and  
Ponds that Fall in Doorways

---

This book reviews our knowledge of the incoherent speech which is not uncommonly seen as a symptom of schizophrenia, and is one of the most researched symptoms in the disorder. The content covers clinical presentation, differential diagnosis and the theories proposed to account for the symptom of ‘thought disorder’, ranging from the psychoanalytic to there being a form of aphasia involved. The book is unique in its ability to apply linguistic and neuropsychological approaches, and is the first to cover comprehensively the range of clinical studies that followed the introduction of Andreasen’s rating scale for thought, language and communication disorders. This book is essential reading for all those working in the field of schizophrenia and also for those interested in language and disorders of speech.

**Peter McKenna** is a psychiatrist with a special interest in schizophrenia. He has written one previous book on the subject and has carried out research, principally on the neuropsychology of the disorder.

**Tomasina Oh** strayed into the area of schizophrenic thought disorder during her PhD. A linguist by training, she is interested in language impairment, as well as the relationship between language and cognition.

Cambridge University Press  
0521810752 - Schizophrenic Speech: Making Sense of Bathrooms and Ponds that Fall in Doorways  
Peter J. McKenna and Tomasina M. Oh  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

# Schizophrenic Speech

Making Sense of Bathrooms and  
Ponds that Fall in Doorways

Peter J. McKenna

Consultant Psychiatrist, Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge and  
Visiting Professor of Psychology, University of Hertfordshire

Tomasina M. Oh

Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and  
Literature, National University of Singapore



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
0521810752 - Schizophrenic Speech: Making Sense of Bathrooms and Ponds that Fall in Doorways  
Peter J. McKenna and Tomasina M. Oh  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521810752](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521810752)

© Cambridge University Press 2005

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception  
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,  
no reproduction of any part may take place without  
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2005

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

ISBN-13 978-0-521-81075-2 hardback  
ISBN-10 0-521-81075-2 hardback

---

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or  
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in  
this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will  
remain, accurate or appropriate.

The publisher has used its best endeavours to ensure that the URLs for  
external websites referred to in his book are correct and active at the time of  
going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites  
and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or  
will remain appropriate.

Every effort has been made in preparing this book to provide accurate and up-  
to-date information that is in accord with accepted standards and practice at  
the time of publication. Nevertheless, the authors, editors and publisher can  
make no warranties that the information contained herein is totally free from  
error, not least because clinical standards are constantly changing through  
research and regulation. The authors, editors and publisher therefore disclaim  
all liability for direct or consequential damages resulting from the use of  
material contained in this book. Readers are strongly advised to pay careful  
attention to information provided by the manufacturer of any drugs or  
equipment that they plan to use.

---

Cambridge University Press  
0521810752 - Schizophrenic Speech: Making Sense of Bathrooms and Ponds that Fall in Doorways  
Peter J. McKenna and Tomasina M. Oh  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

The authors are indebted to two psychologists,  
Alan Baddeley and Rosaleen McCarthy, who  
over a considerable period of time influenced  
the writing of this book in many direct and  
indirect ways.

Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i>	ix
1	Describing schizophrenic speech		1
2	Thought disorder as a syndrome in schizophrenia		26
3	The differential diagnosis of thought disorder		48
4	Thought disorder as a form of dysphasia		80
5	Thought disorder and communicative competence		101
6	Thought disorder as a dysexecutive phenomenon		123
7	The dyssemantic hypothesis of thought disorder		146
8	Some conclusions and a few speculations		172
	<i>References</i>		186
	<i>Index</i>		207

Cambridge University Press

0521810752 - Schizophrenic Speech: Making Sense of Bathrooms and Ponds that Fall in Doorways

Peter J. McKenna and Tomasina M. Oh

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Preface

If ever there were a preface that ought to start with the words ‘Why another book on . . .’, this is probably it. Thought disorder is the most studied symptom of a much-studied disorder, schizophrenia, and there has been a long tradition of punctuating the steady stream of publications on the subject with books. There may be some justification for continuing this tradition, in that the last single-author book on the topic was written in 1990, and, while there have been one or two multi-author volumes since then, it is fair to say that neither of these caught the tide of two major developments in the field. One of these was the wave of clinical studies that followed the introduction of Andreasen’s rating scale for what she called thought, language and communication disorders; the second has been the rise of the neuropsychological approach to schizophrenia.

Naturally, neither of these developments was the reason for writing this particular book, which had more maculate origins. It grew out of our attempts to get a paper based on the research in a Ph.D. published. After engaging in the usual titanic struggle with the reviewers, one of us said to the other in a flash of exasperation that the only way we would ever get the damn thing into print was by writing a book on thought disorder and putting the paper in it somewhere. Immediately we both saw the possibilities for a book, and were quickly able to persuade ourselves that there was a pressing need for one, along the lines laid out in the preceding paragraph.

The phenomenon that forms the topic of this book has gone by many names over the years. Some of these have been picturesque and fanciful, such as word salad and knight’s move thinking. Quite a few have come with their own theoretical baggage, either neurological, for example schizophasia, or psychological, as in the widely used American term, loosening of associations. Eventually, psychiatry settled on one of the most opaque terms ever used, formal thought disorder – the ‘formal’ denoting a disorder in the *form* of the thought processes as opposed to the disorder of *content* of thought exhibited by patients with delusions. As we wrote this book we grew more and more irritated by the clumsiness of this term,

and its unintentional pretentiousness, and so we have substituted the simpler term thought disorder throughout. It may be more confusable with schizophrenic symptoms other than formal thought disorder, and purists may object that it excludes abnormalities of language (and communication), but it at least has the virtue of being less of a mouthful.

A number of people helped in the writing of this book in a number of ways. In addition to her general influence on our way of thinking, Roz McCarthy's knowledge of neuropsychology and aphasia was invaluable. We also owe her a debt of gratitude for patiently but determinedly persuading us that executive function might be relevant to some of the linguistic abnormalities of thought disorder, especially as one of us fought long and hard against accepting this. German Berrios informed the historical aspects of this book through his published work, many conversations and one journalistic interview; beyond this he also provided a great deal of deep background. The authors know a lot more about specific language impairment in children than they did before, after one of them spent an afternoon with Dorothy Bishop in Oxford. Statistically, Steve Graham and Raymond Salvador gave us a crash course in factor analysis, and Keith Laws taught us everything we know about meta-analysis. Paula McKay arranged a trip to Ireland to meet Senator David Norris in order to tap his extensive knowledge about James Joyce and his daughter, Lucia, and we would like to thank both of them for this. We are grateful to Cambridge University Press and Richard Marley for overlooking many missed deadlines. We would also like to thank Shirley Easton for battling to transcribe a number of indistinct recordings of often nearly unintelligible speech. Our families were incredibly tolerant with us, especially in the last few weeks before completion; we hope they know that their support was invaluable in the writing of this book.