

When Language Breaks Down

Doctors, nurses, and other caregivers often know what people with Alzheimer's disease or Asperger's 'sound like' – that is, they recognize patterns in people's discourse from sounds and silences, to words, sentences, and story structures. Such discourse patterns may inform their clinical judgements and affect the decisions they make. However, this knowledge is often tacit, like recognizing a regional accent without knowing how to describe its features. The absence of explicit knowledge of discourse patterns may be partly because research and practice associating neurocognitive function with language has tended to focus on (often isolated) linguistic 'deficits' as signs or symptoms of brain injury or disorder rather than beginning with comprehensive descriptions of discourse. In contrast, this is the first book to present models for comprehensively describing discourse specifically in clinical contexts and to illustrate models with detailed analyses of discourse patterns associated with degenerative (Alzheimer's) and developmental (autism spectrum) disorders. The authors also suggest how clinical discourse analysis, combined with neuropsychological and imaging data, can add to our understanding of neurocognition. The book is aimed not only at advanced students and researchers in linguistics, discourse analysis, speech pathology, and clinical psychology but also at researchers, clinicians, and caregivers for whom explicit knowledge of discourse patterns might be helpful.

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When Language Breaks Down

Analysing Discourse in Clinical Contexts

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-0-521-88978-0 — When Language Breaks Down: Analysing Discourse in Clinical Contexts

Elissa D. Asp, Jessica de Villiers

Frontmatter

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521889780

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First published 2010

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

Asp, Elissa D.

When language breaks down : analysing discourse in clinical contexts /

Elissa D. Asp, Jessica de Villiers.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-521-88978-0 (hardback)

1. Language disorders. 2. Discourse analysis. 3. Alzheimer's disease – Patients–Language. 4. Autism spectrum disorders–Patients–Language.

I. Villiers, Jessica de. II. Title.

RC423.A82 2010

616.85'5–dc22

2009044694

ISBN 978-0-521-88978-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-71824-0 Paperback

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our friends and families for their encouragement and support while we worked on this book. To John Foster and Arnaud Goupilliere we are especially indebted – for making us tea and dinner and cleaning up afterwards, for making us go out in the sunshine sometimes and for cheerfully putting up with us while we worked. We would also like to thank our mentors. Elissa is especially indebted to Dr Kenneth Rockwood, Professor of Medicine (Geriatric Medicine and Neurology) at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia. As well as mentoring her in developing research on discourse in Alzheimer's disease and providing access to data and patients, Dr Rockwood, together with his team, have consistently modelled what interdisciplinary research and clinical care can be. Elissa was also privileged to be invited to participate in the Halifax Symposia on the Treatment of Alzheimer's disease from 2003 to 2008 which brought outstanding international scholars in many disciplines to address particular themes associated with Alzheimer's and dementia. Elissa also wants to thank Jennifer Klages, for generously giving her access to data on vascular cognitive impairment, the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation for their support and Saint Mary's University which has twice given her sabbatical leave to work on the book and projects related to it, and her colleagues in the English department who may flinch but vote in favour of leave to research discourse effects of cholinesterase inhibitors and other similarly unlitrary topics.

Jessica would like to thank Peter Szatmari, whose mentorship and encouragement made much of this work possible. He has been a great advisor, collaborator and supporter. She would also like to thank the Department of English at UBC, her research team and language group, the Faculty of Arts at UBC and the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University for supporting her work in many ways. She is very grateful to the Offord Centre for Child Studies for giving her access to data and other research supports. She gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canadian Institute of Health Research.

We also both want to acknowledge the mentoring of Michael Gregory. He taught us much of what we know about language and discourse analysis, and

although he didn't believe linguists had any business talking about brains or neurology, we think he would have liked this book. Other linguists who influenced our work because of their own are Noam Chomsky, William Downes, Jonathan Fine, Ruqaiya Hasan, Michael Halliday, Rodney Huddleston, Richard Hudson, Ray Jackendoff and Sydney Lamb. We also would like to thank reviewers and readers of our manuscript in its various stages for helpful and encouraging comments, and Andrew Winnard for believing in the project and supporting us in it. Finally, we thank the individuals and families who participated in our studies. Our work is for them.

Transcription conventions

SP1	speaker 1
SP2	speaker 2
IV	interviewer
CG	caregiver
P	patient (in caregiver and patient interviews)
CHI	child
RES	researcher (in semi-structured conversations with researcher)
(1)	line 1
(5)	line 5
()	material in parentheses is inaudible or there is doubt of accuracy
(())	double parentheses indicate clarifying information, e.g. ((laughter))
(.)	a pause which is noticeable but too short to measure
(.5)	a pause timed in tenths of a second
#	noticeable pause, unmeasured
##	long pause, unmeasured
:	colon indicates an extension of the preceding vowel sound
<text>[>]	overlaps following text
<text> [<]	overlaps preceding text
...	some text intervening
Bold	bold is for prominent information (presented as new or emphasized)
<u>Under</u>	underscore is for information that is the focus (unmarked starting point) of a construction
//text//	tone group
//2 text//	tone 2
xxx	unintelligible
[if]	uncertain
^	silent beat

Many of the transcription conventions used are borrowed or adapted from Gail Jefferson's system. (See for example Jefferson 1985; 2004.)