

Agrammatism in Tamil Speaking Broca's Aphasics

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Most of the studies on agrammatism have been done in Western languages like English. Hence, the pattern of deficits seen in Western language may not be applicable to other Indian languages, especially synthetic ones, where inflections, unlike word order play a predominant role. The fact that there can be language specific manifestations of agrammatism was shown by Grodzinsky (1984) in his study of a Hebrew speaking aphasic patient.

Four Broca's aphasics (2 literates, 2 illiterates) were chosen for the study. Performances of the Broca's aphasics were compared with appropriate controls. All subjects were given the following tasks :

- a. Spontaneous speech and
- b. Story narration tasks
- c. Grammaticality judgement task
- d. Picture pointing task.

Results of all the subjects were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative analysis of the expression tasks included calculating mean length of utterance (MLU), content word/function word ratio; closed-class density score and open-class density score. In the grammaticality judgement task, scores obtained on each subsection was added to get a composite score. Further, an index called as "Grammatical sensitivity Index" was calculated. Similarly, in the picture pointing tasks, the scores obtained was added to get a composite score.

Conclusion :

The following conclusions were arrived at:

1. In the production/spontaneous speech of agrammatics, same kind of agrammatic errors were seen as reported in literature i.e. short mean length of utterance, dysprosody, abundance of content words with reduced closed class density score.
2. This study supports Grodzisky's hypothesis, which says that the kind of agrammatic deficit seen will depend on the language structure. In this study, mis-selections rather omissions of function words was seen in all four aphasics.
3. In the grammaticality judgement task, aphasics were found to perform poorly which is in contrast to that reported in literature. Further, illiterate control group was also found to perform poorly when compared to literate controls. In picture pointing tasks, literate aphasics performed comparatively better than illiterate aphasics. Illiterate normals performed slightly poorly on this task also.