



Linguistics and Aphasia

Psycholinguistic and Pragmatic Aspects of Intervention

Ruth Lesser and Lesley Milroy

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Ruth Lesser and Lesley Milroy

Dedication

To the students of the Department of Speech, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, and to the dedicated therapists who are their clinical supervisors.

General Editor's Preface

In their authorial Introduction to this most recent contribution to the *Language in Social Life Series*, Ruth Lesser and Lesley Milroy emphasise the interdisciplinary nature of their subject matter, aphasia, and show in helpful and practical detail throughout the book how the diversity of aphasias and their effects on communication requires a diversity of approaches both for research and intervention. In particular, they focus on the contributions to its study and practice from psycholinguistics and pragmatics, the former emphasising more the source of disturbance in the relationships between linguistic structure and language processing, the latter more the effects of aphasia in terms of impairments to communicative interaction. This association of 'source' and 'effect' is of course not unidirectional and in stressing the mutuality of the psycholinguistic and the pragmatic the authors add powerful weight from their perspective of disorder to the need expressed by researchers into 'ordered' language for greater interaction between the social and the cognitive. Not that the call for such interdependence is new, it is after all inherent in the work of Vygotsky and indeed in many writers in the field of educational linguistics and psychology who have found it unhelpful to separate context and use from content and form. It is, however, recent in aphasiology and has yet to be incorporated fully both in research paradigms and in clinical practice. Hence one of the values of this book.

In highlighting this mutuality, however, one must be careful not to diminish the very real distinctions that apply to both traditions and which, certainly in the older, more established and it has to be said, at this time more coherent, psycholinguistic approach, has built up an impressive body of experimental research and intervention practices, the character of which is

amply illustrated here. Nor should one rush into attempting to construe one tradition in terms of the principles and practices of the other. This is especially important in the still volatile area of pragmatics where early work in the context of aphasia naturally sought to see pragmatic disorder as parallel, but at a 'higher' linguistic level, to the better charted disorders of phonology, lexis and grammar. The identification of units of pragmatic disorder in terms of the inappropriate performance of isolatable speech acts realised in particular utterances is a case in point. The focus at that time and in large measure still now, was on the performance of the aphasic patient, detached for analysis and treatment, as it were, from particular communicative contexts and without a discursal perspective. Not that research into the pragmatics of aphasia in its beginnings twenty or more years ago was any different to other parallel applications of pragmatics at that time to other fields of applied linguistic endeavour, second language acquisition studies being a clear case in point. Indeed the parallels are striking in terms of research agendas, though less so in terms of applications. However, as the characterisation of pragmatics has moved from its linguistic-philosophical beginnings in speech act theory, through the work of Grice, to an accommodation with relevant work in the analysis of discourse and conversation, so there has been a recognition that we need to research the interactions of aphasic patients with their partners and their interlocutors in natural settings, and to see successful and unsuccessful communication as a joint responsibility, affected by particular social conditions. One particular area of considerable interest is thus in the nature of repair, both self-repair by patients and other-repair by partners, and in the management of deixis.

It is important also to realise that these distinct contributing disciplines have their own research methodologies, their own definitions of what constitutes permissible data and in particular their own methods of reporting their findings. In stressing their interdependence, then, one should not seek to force a marriage on the paradigms too hard. As in other areas of applied linguistic research, and I return to that of second language acquisition, the experimental and the ethnographic orientation each has its adherents, its particular practices and its related but distinctive objectives. The striking quality of this book is that it presents both positions, both orientations, and, significantly, shows how

they can not only be usefully combined in aphasia management but also, more controversially perhaps, how both paradigms need to accommodate the other in research. I suspect that it will be at this researcher and theoretician level that this accommodation will prove hardest to achieve. Strong disciplinary allegiances make interdisciplinary work, especially in the contentious field of language, difficult to realise and difficult to fund. Nonetheless, the evidence and the practices charted here suggest the importance of this accommodation, for both theoretical and practical reasons.

We are thus at an exciting moment in aphasia research and in the practical management of aphasia, one where we can attempt at least to bring under one roof the contributing disciplines of psychology, philosophy, sociology and anthropology, together with relevant models of linguistics, as they impinge on and offer candidate explanations for language disorders and suggest appropriate modes of treatment and intervention. More than that, however, we can look at aphasia research and management as a paradigm case in applied linguistics; one which not only displays the interdependence of research and practice in the study of language, the brain and social context, but one which as a social and personal *problem*, provides a challenge and a means for bringing together relevant disciplinary research. It is evident from the chapters of this book that Ruth Lesser and Lesley Milroy have been able to identify the considerable benefits such collaboration can bring in terms of new research questions and new patterns of treatment. What they do not say, of course, is how this mutuality and this collaboration can be best achieved amongst researchers and between them and practitioners. That is the question that this book raises for the training institutions and their professional and academic structures, in terms of linking research and practice, constructing appropriate interdisciplinary curricula and in facilitating the establishment of mixed research teams. The two authors of this book, from somewhat different disciplinary perspectives but with a mutuality of interest and engagement, indicate how this collaboration can be most productively achieved.

Christopher N Candlin
General Editor

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This book was written very much in response to our perceptions as teachers of speech-language therapy students, both of their needs and of the needs of their patients. We are therefore indebted to students in the Department of Speech at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne during the 1980s who acted as helpful, enthusiastic and responsive guinea pigs in enabling many of the ideas developed in this book to be tested. Sometimes, however, their involvement was closer than this. We are particularly indebted to Lisa Perkins, who, both as an undergraduate and a postgraduate researcher, has worked closely with us. Her work is acknowledged as we discuss it at various points in the text. Thanks are also due to Catriona Fleming, Naomi Conway and Gail Barnsley who, in the course of writing their undergraduate dissertations, helped us to develop our approach. We gratefully acknowledge the help of the following, in providing us with transcriptions of both normal and aphasic conversation: Catherine Booth, Mandy Chadwick, Moira Conlon, Catherine Crockford, Pat Fenwick, Karen Finnie, Suzanne Platt, Jennifer Smith, Jo Vanderlinden, Helen Watson, Anne Whitworth. Our thanks also go to the many aphasic patients who have allowed themselves to be subjects of psycholinguistic investigations by ourselves and our students; our respect and admiration for these patients and their families continues to increase over the years.

We are grateful to our series editor, Chris Candlin, for the careful and conscientious way in which he dealt with our manuscript and for his many helpful suggestions at all stages of composition.

Transcription conventions

Excerpts of data cited from other works are reproduced with minimal modification to the original transcription conventions. The conventions used for transcribing our own material, adapted from those of Levinson (1983: 370), are as follows:

<i>Italic</i>	Simultaneous speech
(0.0)	Pauses or gaps in tenths of seconds
(.)	Micropause
(2 syll)	Uncertain passage of transcription, with number of syllables indicated where possible. Round brackets are also used to enclose inferred glosses on indistinct utterances
.hhh	Audible in-breath
= =	Latched utterances with no gap
CAPS	Relatively loud speech
:	Lengthened syllable
?	Not a punctuation mark, but marks a rising intonation contour
/	Marks a tone group boundary in longer utterances

Phonetic symbols used are those of the International Phonetics Association.

