



Tell Me Your Story: Analysis of Script Topics Selected by Persons with Aphasia (Review)

Articles at a Glance · Pathways for Aphasia

Holland, A., Halper, A, and Cherney L. (2010). Tell Me Your Story: Analysis of Script Topics Selected by Persons with Aphasia. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 19, 198-203.

Background Information

Clinicians incorporate scripts or script therapy into their aphasia intervention because recent studies show that many persons with aphasia (PWA) can communicate short segments of fluent speech on a specific topic. A script is a pre-planned interaction (like a movie script) that gives the PWA a chance to follow the natural flow of the interaction and respond appropriately. The clinician might record the script or provide a written copy for practice in the therapy session or at home. Another alternative could be a type of virtual therapist computer program, such as the one used in this study.

Research shows that conversational topics during the beginning of language therapy sessions are primarily chosen by the therapist rather than the PWA. In addition, the topics chosen by the therapist are more “narrowly selected and typically tied to the aphasia and communication problems.”

The researchers in this study speculate that if PWA had more control of topic selection, they may instead choose topics related to their personal interests, activities, and participation in their home and community.

Research Method

To provide insight into desired topics, the 33 participants in this study worked with a clinician (and family members, if necessary) to develop a script (collaborative scripting) of interest or one that would be useful. Once finalized, each participant received at least three scripts to practice at home with a computerized virtual therapist (AphasiaScripts). Script performance

was recorded. However, it was not discussed specifically in this article as the main goal of the study was to explore the detail and content of the scripts.

Of the 100 reviewed scripts, 28 were categorized as monologues and 72 were dialogues. Dialogues were then divided into two groups: 32 scripts with the PWA as the responder and 40 scripts with the PWA as the initiator. From all of these, the script themes were categorized, and frequency was calculated.

Key Findings

- Most common themes for monologues:
 - 1) Life stories (the largest category). Sub-themes include:
 - Monologues about the stroke.
 - Introduction of self to others.
 - Pre-stroke stories.
 - Retelling impersonal stories/events.
 - 2) Prayers, testimonials, speeches, and lectures.
 - 3) Outside interests.
 - 4) Making plans.

- Most common themes for dialogues:
 1. Conversations with family (especially important conversations about daily life).
 2. Seeking or providing information.
 3. Outside interests.
 4. Ordering in a restaurant.
 5. Talking on the phone.
 6. Conversations with others.
 7. Stories from life (present, pre-stroke, retelling events).
 8. Work talk.
 9. Making plans.

- Script training or “whole task training” may be an additional clinical tool in aphasia intervention. Studies show scripting to increase the performance of fluency, sentence structure, and semantic or grammatical access for PWAs.

- Clinicians might seek to incorporate topics (such as those identified in this study) that are more meaningful to the PWA, regardless of the type of intervention used. When intervention is meaningful, PWA may be more motivated to participate and practice.

- Finally, beyond the topics discovered in this study, the script content reveals that PWA want to use a variety of communicative functions within their conversations, no matter how brief. For example, many dialogue scripts seek specific information about family members, foster interactions by asking questions, or provide information by answering questions. The authors suggest that although asking questions is not a regular focus of aphasia intervention, it could be “extremely manageable.”

Applying the Findings with Tobii Dynavox Aphasia Pages

- **Topics:** The Tobii Dynavox Aphasia Pages include many topics that were chosen directly from the themes and sub-themes identified in this study.
- **Topic Words:** Topic Words can trigger speech, assist in repairing speech, and/or serve as an alternative to speech.
- **Scripts:** Scripts are a series of messages that support communication in everyday situations. Scripts can be used tell stories, share information back and forth, and as a cue for what to say verbally. Every Topic page includes a script that you can use immediately or customize. You can also add your own original script.

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