

Nada Vasić

Pronoun Comprehension in Agrammatic Aphasia

The Structure and Use of Linguistic Knowledge

This study focuses on the establishment of pronominal dependencies in individuals with Broca's aphasia. It offers insight in how the fields of aphasiology and linguistics can meet and can help broaden one's knowledge base on this particular linguistic phenomenon and its breakdown in Broca's aphasia. In addition to data from language breakdown, data from preschool-children examining the same phenomena are also provided. The two language systems share the same insufficient ability to implement grammatical knowledge as a consequence of a lack of processing resources. As such, children's and Broca's patients' performance patterns can be compared and more can be learned about the general organisation of knowledge of reference assignment.

The experimental results provide evidence for a hierarchical organisation of the healthy, impaired and developing linguistic systems. They point towards a reduction in the capacity of Broca's patients to process syntactic information on time. In healthy non-brain-damaged adults syntactic operations are the most automatic (economical) operations used to establish pronoun-antecedent dependencies. The syntactic operations block other possible operations that can potentially be used to establish these kinds of dependencies. In Broca's patients and pre-school children, syntactic information is not ready on time. As a consequence, other levels of information, such as discourse or the non-linguistic level, come into play and provide information for pronoun resolution sometimes resulting in erroneous dependencies. The observed error patterns in these populations thus reveal a competition between narrow syntax and other systems.

This is a multidisciplinary study and is of relevance to any scholar in the fields of neurolinguistics, first language acquisition, theoretical linguistics, psycholinguistics and clinical linguistics.

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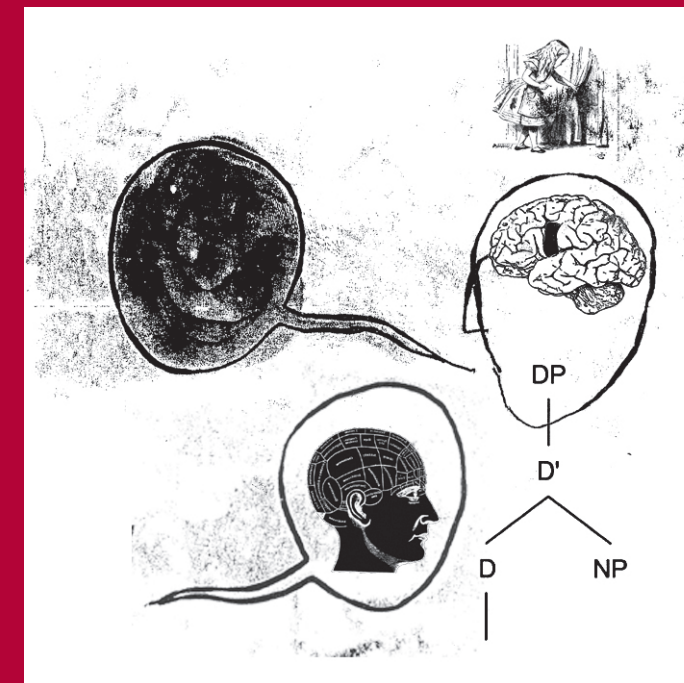
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