

The Language of Love: Dating with Aphasia

Eleanor Krobath, B.S. & Katelynn Morris, B.S.

Faculty sponsor: Amanda Eaton, PhD, CCC-SLP



Fontbonne UNIVERSITY

Abstract

“Stroke and aphasia can negatively affect a person’s ability to maintain healthy social relationships, both within the family and also with friends and the wider network” (Fotiadou et al., 2014). However, very few studies explicitly target skills needed for successful dating among clients with aphasia. Survey data was collected from adults with chronic aphasia to determine perceived barriers, confidence, fear, and success associated with dating, and previous experience in speech therapy. This session will include a literature review related to aspects of communication needed for successful dating, aphasia-related deficits, and the potential impact on the dating process. Participant responses will be analyzed and presented. Additionally, goals, target selection, and other considerations for intervention will be discussed.

Communication skills needed for dating

- “Effective social interaction assumes the ability to communicate one’s own level of interest and to gauge the other person’s state accurately.” (Fitchen, et. al, 1992)
- Dating skills may include:
 - Nonverbal visual
 - **Verbal**
 - Paralinguistic cues
 - Touch
 - Unclassifiable
 - Intangible
 - **Alternative forms of communication (texting/apps)**

Aphasia

- Linguistic deficits
 - Spoken language expression (expressive)
 - Written expression (agraphia)
 - Spoken language comprehension (receptive)
 - Reading comprehension (alexia)
- Psychological/emotional effects
 - Frustration
 - Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Depression

(Fitchen, et. al, 1992)
("Aphasia," ASHA)

■ Verbal Skills & Aphasia

- Asking/answering questions
- Adding to the conversation
- Compliments
- Repeat or Clarify
- Verbalize how one feels
- Make jokes
- Request contact information

All of these relationship/dating skills have language embedded in them, therefore, are affected by aphasia in many ways including expressive and receptive language.

Dating & Alternative forms of communication

- **“People with the communication disorder of aphasia are disadvantaged in the use of information and communication technology such as mobile phones and are reported to be more socially isolated than their peers” (Greig et al., 2008).**
- Key barriers for communication technology in individuals with aphasia
 - Written support
 - Design and features of the device (navigation)
 - Communication partners

(Greig et al., 2008, p.).

Methodology

- Aphasia-friendly format
 - Visuals
 - Yes/no response (23/28 questions)
 - Rating scales (5/28 questions)
- 5 minutes to complete

2→ Have you received speech therapy before?

Description (optional)



The image shows a user interface for a yes/no question. It consists of three rectangular buttons. The first button on the left contains a large green checkmark and is labeled 'A YES' at the bottom. The second button in the middle contains a large red 'X' and is labeled 'B NO' at the bottom. The third button on the right is empty and contains a blue plus sign '+', likely representing an 'Other' or 'Add response' option.

24→ Rate your dating/relationship skills

Description (optional)



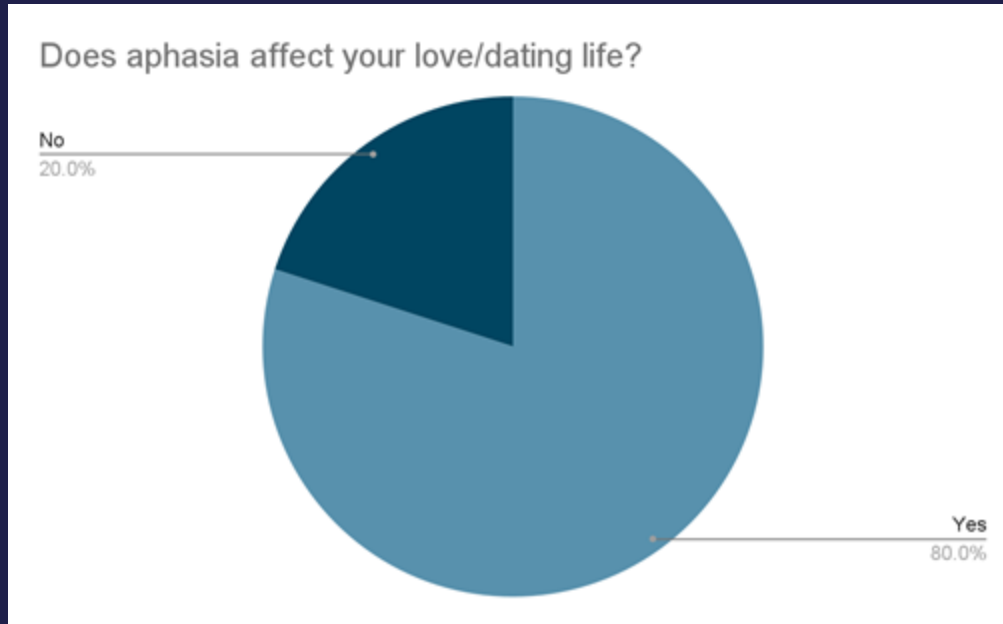
The image shows a rating scale for dating/relationship skills. It features a horizontal row of six square buttons labeled with the numbers 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Below the buttons, the word 'Poor' is positioned under the number 0, 'Good' is positioned under the number 3, and 'Excellent' is positioned under the number 5.

Methodology

- Participants
 - 17 responses received
 - All individuals indicated “yes” when asked if they have aphasia
 - Both male and female
 - 47% in a relationship, 53% single
 - Participants were contacted via Facebook groups, online forums, and email via university clinics
 - Volunteered to complete survey
 - Anonymous
 - Our survey consisted of 28 questions highlighting three main topics:
 - Relationship & aphasia history
 - Relationship desires
 - Psychological

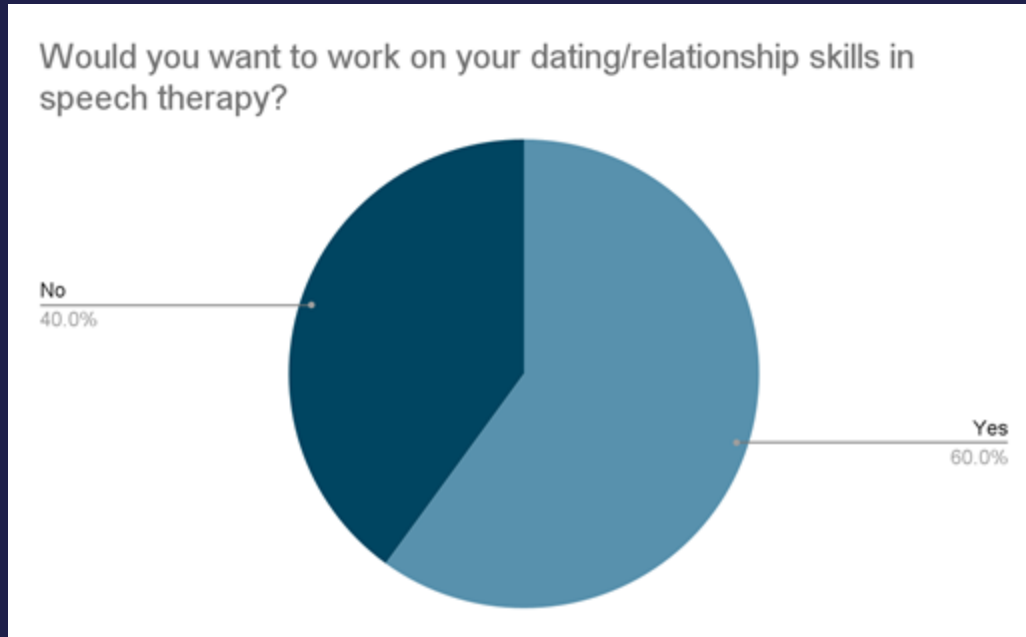
Results: Aphasia & Relationship History

- 16/17 participants reported that they had received speech therapy before
- 60% said that they have have had aphasia for less than 10 years
- 65% of individuals said that they use their phone to text or call others



Results: Relationship Desires

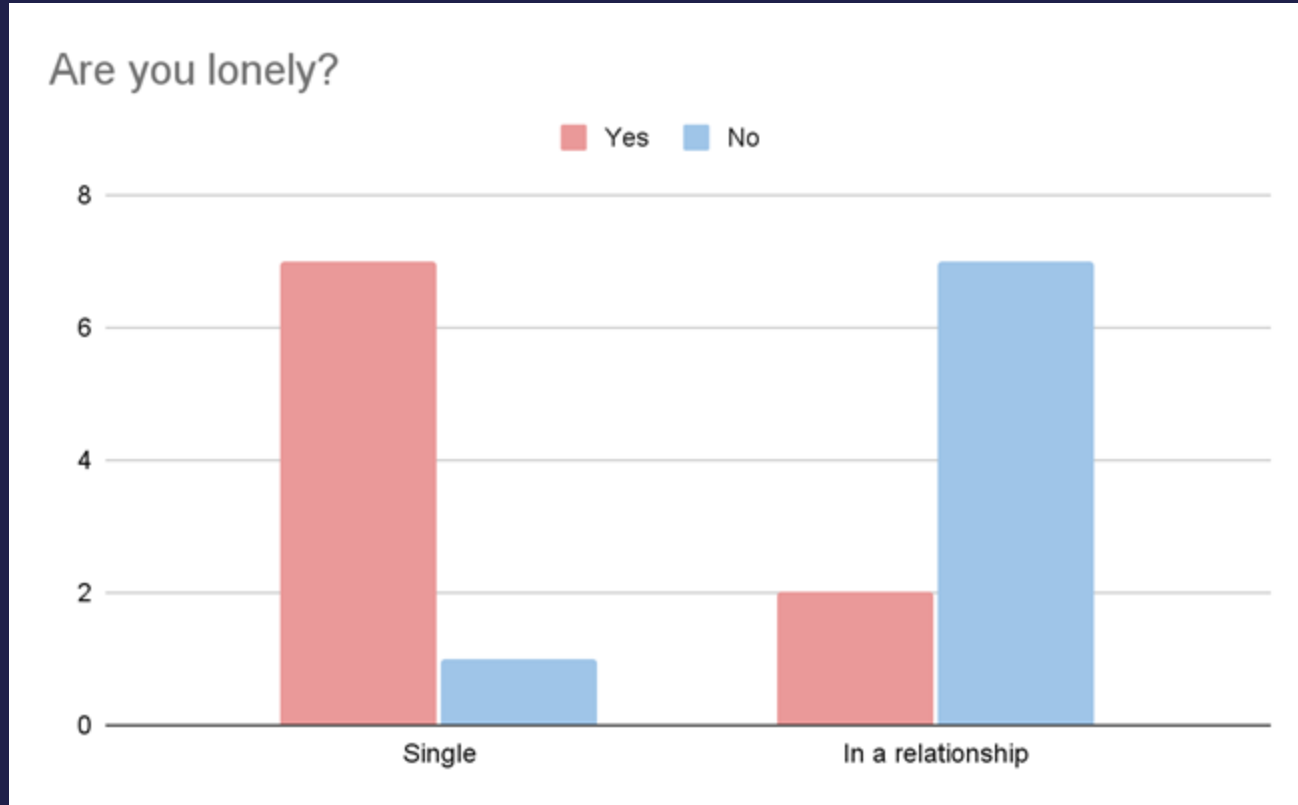
- It is important to have a partner in my life
 - On a scale 1-5, individuals reported an average of 4 (Important)



■ Results: Psychological/Social

- 70% said that they are hard on themselves when they do something wrong
- 60% said that aphasia makes expressing their feelings difficult
- 50% said they have a hard time making friends
- 55% reported that aphasia makes them feel less confident

Results: Psychological/Social



Treatment for Dating with aphasia

- **Navigating dating apps**
 - Visual aids
 - Rehearsals
- **Cell phone use**
 - Total communication approach
 - Graphics (emojis, sending location, gifs)
(Greig et al., 2008, p.)
- **Script training**
- “Typically involves the repeated practice of words, phrases, and sentences embedded within a monologue or dialogue that is individualized to the person with aphasia” (Kaye, 2017).
 - Various scripts for certain dating/relationship situations
- **Group therapy**
 - “Group therapy creates a milieu to address functional, pragmatic communication goals for those with severe aphasia by eliciting increased initiation of communication and a greater diversity of expressive modalities, when compared to individual therapy” (Fama, et al., 2016).
 - Functional situations to rehearse scripts and practice use of strategies

Treatment for Dating with aphasia

- Life participation approaches to aphasia (LPAA)
 - Places responsibility on the learner, because they are more likely to achieve goals that are personally meaningful to them (Kimbarow).
- “Although supported discussion of emotional issues might take time away from planned tasks, discussing emotionally difficult topics offers opportunities for relationship building, authentic communication practice, and successful experience with problem solving.”
- **Counseling**
 - Allocate time to tasks or activities that gear towards client’s goals
 - Actively listen to concerns, feelings, and opinions
 - Client-centered collaborative approach & “being heard”
 - Correct client misconceptions, expand on client knowledge, and discuss fears (Simmons-Mackie & Damico)
- “A critical goal is to encourage the development of community resources, advocacy strategies, and support networks” (Ganzfreid).
 - Advocacy within the dating process

Conclusion

- Dating skills
 - Verbal and alternative forms of communication
- Aphasia
 - Expressive, receptive, alexia, agraphia
- Communication disruptions with aphasia related to dating
- Treatment strategies
 - Script training, dating apps/texting, group therapy, AAC devices
 - Counseling
 - Building confidence
- Building awareness and advocacy
 - Dating skills in speech therapy for all populations

Future research

- Further research on this topic and the effectiveness of intervention strategies is necessary
- Other disorders and dating/relationships
 - Pragmatic deficits
 - Cognitive deficits
 - Fluency
 - Voice

References

“Aphasia.” American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, <https://prep.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aphasia/>.

Dimitra Fotiadou, Sarah Northcott, Ariadni Chatzidaki & Katerina Hilari (2014) Aphasia blog talk: How does stroke and aphasia affect a person’s social relationships?, *Aphasiology*, 28:11, 1281-1300, DOI: [10.1080/02687038.2014.928664](https://doi.org/10.1080/02687038.2014.928664)

Fama, M. E., Baron, C. R., Hatfield, B., & Turkeltaub, P. E. (2016). Group therapy as a social context for aphasia recovery: a pilot, observational study in an acute rehabilitation hospital. *Topics in stroke rehabilitation*, 23(4), 276–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10749357.2016.1155277>

Fichten, C. S., Tagalakis, V., Judd, D., Wright, J., & Amsel, R. (1992). Verbal and nonverbal communication cues in daily conversations and dating. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 132(6), 751–769. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1992.9712105>

Fotiadou, Dimitria, et al. “Aphasia Blog Talk: How Does Stroke and Aphasia Affect a Person's Social Relationships?” *Aphasiology*, Taylor & Francis Online, 19 June 2014, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02687038.2014.928664>.

Ganzfried, E. S. (2018). Living With Aphasia: Realities, Challenges, and Opportunities. *Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups*, 3(2), 68–79. <https://doi.org/10.1044/persp3.SIG2.68>

References

Greig, C.-A., Harper, R., Hirst, T., Howe, T., & Davidson, B. (2008). Barriers and facilitators to mobile phone use for people with aphasia. *Topics in Stroke Rehabilitation*, 15(4), 307–324. <https://doi.org/10.1310/tsr1504-307>

Kaye, Rosalind C, and Leora Reiff Cherney. (2017). “Script Templates: A Practical Approach to Script Training in Aphasia.” *Topics in language disorders* vol. 36,2 (2016): 136-153. doi:10.1097/TLD.0000000000000086

Kimbarow, Michael L. PhD, CCC-SLP, BC-NCD. Integrating Life Participation Approaches to Aphasia Treatment With Adult Learning Theory: A Synergistic Approach. *Topics in Language Disorders* 27(4):p 318-323, October 2007. | DOI: 10.1097/01.TLD.0000299886.16617.25

Manning, M., MacFarlane, A., Hickey, A., Galvin, R., & Franklin, S. (2022). Regulating emotional responses to aphasia to Re-engage in life: A qualitative interview study. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 57(2), 352–365. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12702>

Simmons-Mackie, Nina, and Jack S. Damico. “Counseling and Aphasia Treatment .” *Allied Health* , 2011, <https://alliedhealth.ceconnection.com/files/TLD1011D-1337960838684.pdf>.

Tippett, Donna C et al. “Aphasia: Current Concepts in Theory and Practice.” *Journal of neurology & translational neuroscience* vol. 2,1 (2014): 1042.