Aphasia Beyond the Western Aphasia Battery Cutoff: What to do?

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Abstract

Aphasia is a complex language disorder that can vary in severity dependent upon the amount of damage in specific areas of the brain responsible for language expression and comprehension. Typically, the extent of the disorder, and prediction for successful treatment is assessed and confirmed by a set of comprehensive language tests conducted by a speech-language pathologist. The Western Aphasia Battery-Revised (WAB-R) is commonly used to assess the linguistic and non-linguistic skills most frequently affected by aphasia. A score of 93.8 or above distinguishes an individual as normal or non-aphasic; however, many people with aphasia score above this cut-off and still report life activity and participation difficulties.

Learner Outcomes:

- Describe the linguistic and social difficulties of individuals with mild-anomic aphasia beyond the WAB-R cutoff
- Determine therapy objectives for individuals with mild-anomic aphasia beyond the WAB-R cutoff
- Assess various available treatment methods for individuals with mild-anomic aphasia beyond the WAB-R cutoff

WAB-R Results: Generalities of Mild Anomic Aphasia

- The core lexicon of story summary production when describing an image had fewer main concepts and less diversity of words than what was produced by nonaphasic speakers describing the same picture (Dalton & Richardson, 2015).
- In the retelling of a story, the discourse contained fewer total utterances, fewer words per minute, less lexical diversity, more word errors, and fewer main concepts than nonaphasic speakers (Fromm et al., 2017).
- The retelling was slower, had restricted vocabulary, and more word errors. Word errors could be characterized as simple phonemic paraphasias. The reduced words per minute in these speakers was affected by the presence of pauses, fillers, revisions, and repetitions (Fromm et al., 2017).
- Reduced speech rate (as measured by words per minute) was also indicated during procedural discourse tasks (Fromm et al., 2013).

Impact on Quality of Life

- Those who score above the WAB-R cutoff demonstrate spoken language marked by:
  - word errors
  - slower rate of speech
  - decreased essential content.
- As a result, conversation, communication, and/or participation is negatively impacted.
- Research shows that a decrease in socialization, laughter, and a sense of community decreases quality of life (Madden et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2015).

Formation of Therapy Objectives

- Expositional, narrative, and procedural language samples should be collected because they tax the language system in different ways. The samples should then be assessed for breakdowns that occur when linguistic domains interact (Stark, 2019).
- Objectives may target many areas such as:
  - Establishing the main point
  - Increase number of utterances
  - Increase lexical diversity
  - Increase vocabulary use
  - Increase life participation
- Sample Objective:
  - The client will improve verbal production in number of content words produced when retelling stories utilizing the M-RET protocol across five data collection days.

Standardized Approaches

- Modified response elaboration (M-RET): The person with mild aphasia is asked to retell stories or describe the steps in a procedure (Wambaugh et al., 2013).
- Attentive Reading With Constrained Summarization-Written (ARCS-W): integrates attentive reading or listening with constrained summarization of discourse level material in spoken and written modalities (Obermeyer & Edmonds, 2018).
- Communication Partner / Conversation Training: focuses on communicative interaction rather than improvement in discrete linguistic skills (DeDe & Hoover, 2021).

Contact & References

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