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The Phonetic Features of Recurrent Utterance in Aphasic Native Speakers of Brazilian Portuguese (PB): A Case Report

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Introduction

The verbal stereotypy is a linguistic behavioral characteristic of aphasia. It can be described as the emission of sound segments which are repeated automatically every time an aphasic individual tries to communicate (Lébana, 1993). It may be composed of real words, which usually follow the syntactic rules of the speakers of a native language, called lexical, or non-identifiable words drawn from the phonemic system of the language, called non-lexical. Code (1982) notes, when discussing the origin of verbal stereotypy (recurrent utterance) in the English language, that the non-lexical usually presents a CV syllable structure or a concatenation of CV syllables which are mostly comprised of plosive speech sounds and vowel. From the phonetic point of view, the author considers the non-lexical as structurally simpler. The aim of this study is to make a phonetic description of the segmental level of non-lexical recurrent utterance of aphasic individuals in the Brazilian Portuguese language.

Method

The study was done with eight aphasic subjects who suffered an ischemic stroke, with dominant hemisphere lesion. The collected data were analyzed from the phonetic transcription of the utterances produced by the subjects responding to linguistic tasks such as repetition and naming confrontation. We analyzed one hundred and thirty-six statements to determine: the distribution and frequency of phones, considering the segmental aspects of the consonants (way, point and state of glottis) and vowels (height, articulation area and lip position), the frequency of phones in repetition and naming tasks, the type of syllables and the frequency of occurrence of phones in both recurrent and non-recurrent forms of statements.

This study was approved by our University’s Ethic Committee (ETIC 519/07)

Results and discussion

In the results, it was observed that the syllabic structures that appeared in the speech of different informants were: V, CV, CVV, and CCV and they obeyed the phonotactics rules of the PB. We found six subjects presenting recurrent form of utterances and two presenting non-recurrent. The phones reviewed totaled 703 consonants and 882 vowels with high occurrence of stop consonants (53%), alveolar (59%) and voiceless (67%). Related to vowel phones we noted a higher frequency of upper middle vowels (37%), anterior (39%) and non-labialized (42%). The phones can be considered allophones of phones of the PB. As to the type of linguistic tasks, we found a greater variability of consonant phones in the repetition tasks and of vocalic phones in the naming. A linguistic analysis of the phenomenon of recurrent utterance will contribute to a better understanding of this behavior and will help to plan future interventions in order to try to reverse this behavior.

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