

Aphasia and topic talk

A case study

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any unattributed material previously published or written by any other person. I also declare that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted to any other institution for, or as part of, a degree.

This study was granted approval by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research) (reference: HE26SEP2008-D06134) and conducted in accordance with the guidelines stipulated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Barnes', with a stylized, cursive script.

Scott E. Barnes
May, 2011

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Related Presentations and Publications

Portions of the content and text of this thesis appear in the following presentations and publications. They are listed in chronological order.

Barnes, S. E. (2009). Conversational storytelling after acquired brain injury: Some preliminary observations on storytelling episodes as a site of assessment for aphasia. Poster presented at the *11th International Pragmatics Conference*. Melbourne, July 12-17.

Barnes, S. E. (2009). Interaction, language, and aphasia: A brief case study. Paper presented at the *HCSNet Workshop on Aphasia Rehabilitation and Neuroplasticity: Translating Principles into Practice*. Sydney, November 16.

Barnes, S. E., & Armstrong, E. (2010). Conversation after right hemisphere brain damage: Motivations for applying conversation analysis. *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics*, 24(1), 55-69.

Barnes, S. E. (2010). Recipient action during extended sequences: Achieving alignment as a speaker with chronic communication disorder. Poster presented at the *Social Perspectives in Acquired Communication Disorders Colloquium*. University College London, 15-16 June.

Barnes, S. E. (2010). Generating topic when content is problematic: Initiating topic sequences using turn-initial ‘and’. Poster presented at the *International Conference on Conversation Analysis*, Mannheim, July 4-8.

Barnes, S. E. (2010). Reciprocity and aphasia: Responding with *that’s right*. Paper presented at the *7th Australasian Symposium on Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorisation Analysis*. Wellington, November 24-25..

Barnes, S. E., & Ferguson, A. (in press). Conversation analysis applied to disordered speech and language. In M.J. Ball & N. Müller (Eds.), *The Blackwell guide to research methods in clinical linguistics and phonetics*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Barnes, S. E. (in press). Claiming mutual stance: On the use of *that’s right* by a person with aphasia. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*.

Abstract

This study uses Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine the organisation of topic talk in interactions involving a person with aphasia (Valerie). Approximately three and a half hours of video recordings involving Valerie were collected and analysed for this study. The most outstanding aggregate feature of Valerie's topic talk was an asymmetry of speakership. It was found that Valerie's routine conversation partners spoke more, and for longer periods. This study identifies the motivations for this asymmetry, and the mechanisms of its accomplishment. In doing so, it also analyses how Valerie used particular linguistic forms to implement discrete actions during topic talk. Valerie's conduct as both a primary speaker and a recipient during topic talk is described. Initiating and progressing topic talk were found to be recurrently difficult for her. Valerie had more success with topic talk initiations that projected primary speakership for her conversation partners. These topic talk initiations frequently involved turn-initial *and*. It is argued that *and*-prefaced turns offered Valerie a number of interactional advantages in general, and for initiating topic talk in particular. Valerie's activities as a recipient during topic talk are then discussed. One highly recurrent response—*that's right*—was selected for analysis, and the following functional variants were identified: confirming; mutual stance; recognition; compliment; and restored intersubjectivity. Composite responses involving *that's right* are also examined. This study contributes to conversation-analytic research by describing largely unexamined ways of using *and* and *that's right* during everyday talk-in-interaction. It contributes to aphasiology by offering new information about the effects of aphasia on the organisation of topic talk, and by helping expand the communicative activities and linguistic resources that are considered relevant for investigating and treating aphasia.

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