

Déficits cognitifs et langagiers

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Using Language Behavior as a Marker of Neurocognitive Impairment: The Case of Frontotemporal Dementia

Observable language behaviors reflect cognitive and social competencies. As a result, determining whether language behaviors are markers of neurocognitive impairment can be challenging. This talk uses frontotemporal dementia (FTD) as a case study to consider how employing an interactional linguistics approach can contribute to our understanding of the relationship between language behavior and cognition, particularly whether and when we may understand a language behavior as a consequence of brain degeneration or of some other social, contextual factors. I present two threads of preliminary work. The first examines echolalia (meaningless repetition), which became one of the early supporting diagnostic criteria for FTD, to consider how an interactional linguistics approach reveals repetition to be interactionally motivated and thus calls into question whether such a language behavior can rightly be considered a marker of FTD impairment. The second thread considers patients' intact capacity to negotiate isolated turns in conversation alongside their difficulty managing the cumulative meaning of those turns and how they contribute to larger interactional sequences. The ordinariness and *sequential* nature of such a 'language behavior' renders it difficult to document, but likely arises from frontal lobe degeneration associated with FTD and may reflect deficits in executive functioning. Together, these two threads of inquiry highlight the challenges of working in the intersections of language and cognition, particularly as they relate to disorder, and also reveal how employing an interactionally-based approach may help address such challenges.