Contextualization, formulaicity, and situation-bound routines in Alzheimer Talk

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Overview: we identify

- the extent to which formulaic sequences and SBU are associated with
- short (less than 1 sec) and long pauses (2+ sec), and are
- collocated with discourse markers and similar contextualization cues.

Methodology: we analyze

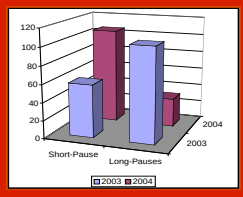
- two conversational narratives in two successive years,
- from each of two 90-year-old women, one from NZ and one from NC. Each woman has moderate impairment from Alzheimer's Disease (DAT).

Purpose: examining metaphor, MWE, and formulaic language lets us see

1. ways that their use seems to be essential to human communication
2. how older speakers retain and manipulate figurative and formulaic language from key periods in their lives
3. what the hearer sometimes has to do in order to interpret formulaic language

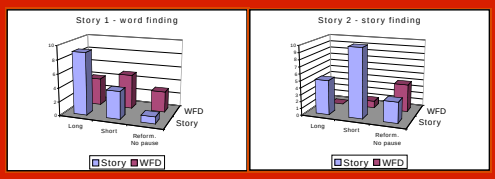
Joan

Pauses, planning and timing



Total words show slight decrease

5231 (2003) **5065** (2004)



Year 1 **Year 2**

Coding

Turn 7 J R

[Continuation]	+ but we slept + we slept at night	
Parenthetical	the school was in in a secluded place < yup > I suppose this is what mother thought +	
	and we went home ***after school*** and had the night < yup > sleeping	Complication
Word finding	and with the fresh ‡ ***air from the sea***	
	‡ ***apart from that*** we went every school	Complication
Repair/Elaboration	not holidays ‡ term	
	‡ and ***Christmas holidays*** and just ***ran wild*** really we came ***out of the gate across the road*** and we ***stepped onto*** the sand hill < oh yes > and we were ***just a little walk down to the beach*** < yes yes >	Complication Complication
	and we were all good swimmers we'd learnt to swim at school < of course > we were all good swimmers	Evaluation
New story	+ and I remember down at the end of the beach we ***used to call it*** the baths < yes >	Orientation
Word finding-circumlocution	***I used to think*** I think that probably they had ***in the earlier days*** some + baths that were good for people to come and	Orientation
Word finding	‡ lie in < oh right > I don't know < yes yes yes > ah whether they were hot < yes > maybe they might've might've heated them ***I don't know*** < yup >	Orientation SBR
Word finding-circumlocution	there was also the ah + reception area where the	Orientation
Word finding	‡ the boats ***come in*** to not to park ***what do you call*** /to anchor/ < /to moor/ to anchor >	Orientation SBR??

Tracking story with DAT speakers

- We use every verbal clue we can find for landmarks, pathways and signposts, such as
  - Intonation for emphasis and for referentiality
  - Discourse markers
  - Repetition of words, phrases, themes, motifs
  - Formulaic phrases and SBUs
- Pauses may be one of the few remaining verbal clues

What hearers need to bring

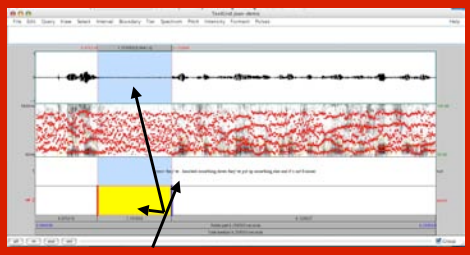
- We don't always know the context for a metaphor or a formula or a multiword expression that somebody uses in conversational stories
- Sometimes we need help from prosody, pauses, and SBUs to spot what Bamberg calls the 'small stories,' and to track the larger ones

Joan's pauses

- In moving from early to moderate dementia, pauses shift function from word-finding to story-finding.
- Timing gives way to planning at story-level

Tracking pauses: Transcriber

Tracking pauses: Praat



Highlighted pause 1.157sec

Glory

Planning and pausing

Glory Mason, 2002

GM: I know where my husband is, ***I think*** he's ***way off somewhere*** ***I forgot*** what the name of the place is + .

(New story) when I was ***at home***, I attended Fountain Hill Methodist Church

GM: And they washed each other's feet they didn't really wash them they'd pick up water in their hands and they'd pour it on the feet and + uh + we attended that some, too my grandparents, they belonged to that church. + .

(New story) ***it seemed like*** they did have, I ***about forgot*** how it was, they ***might did have*** + ***a foot washing*** + ***in the summer time*** and have a dinner ***out on the ground***.

Pausing: Hayes et al, 2005

- Does not occur only at syntactic boundaries (Pinker 2005)
- Two kinds of pauses (Ferreira (1993) :
  - "timing based pauses" based on preceding material – due to prosody
  - "planning based pauses" due to upcoming material – due to syntax
- **We think it is due to discourse**

Formulaic utterances and SBUs

- a sequence, continuous or discontinous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated:
- that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar

Wray & Perkins (2002)

- SBUs 'are usually based on conceptual metaphors or conventional implicatures. Their meanings are motivated and not arbitrary

Kecskes 2002: 92

Conclusion

- Our focus on pauses clarifies their role as a signal that the speaker is trying to locate position or element within a story
  - Their function in narration usually identifies a key detail in a complication or an evaluation
  - As cognitive impairment increases, the pausing changes to signal difficulty in retrieval of narrative components