

Tense/Aspect category in fluent and non-fluent Polish and German aphasia – A contrastive study

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Objectives & Background: The aim of this study is to describe the linguistic performance regarding sentence comprehension and production of tense/aspect category from the morphological and semantic point of view, in fluent and non-fluent German and Polish aphasia. As the category of aspect is reflected in German by means of tense morphology (Van Hout et al., 2005; Musan, 2001), the difference between the ongoing action (Präsens→Imperfektiv) and the completed past action (Perfekt→Perfektiv) is tested (Wischer & Habermann, 2004). In Polish, it is primarily the derivational morphology which signals the change of the aspect within the same temporal frame. Thus, the perfective aspect is realized by means of regular prefixes, whereas the imperfective might be expressed with the use of the so-called *internal* prefixes (Grzegorzczkova et al., 1998).

Special interest is taken in observing any differences or similarities in verbal processing in fluent and non-fluent aphasia, since in majority of cases the data of non-fluent aphasia only are available in the literature.

Methods:

The following four tasks were used in the experiment:

- Auditory comprehension task
- Sentence completion task
- Oral production task
- Semantic-ordering task

The task design comprised of 38 and 45 pictures in German and Polish, respectively. The pictures presented were randomised. The last non-linguistic task functioned as a cognitive control tool, where the patients were asked to put the future, present and past activities in the proper order.

All tasks were carried out with the control groups in both languages and no significant error patterns were noted.

Results: Seven German and five Polish aphasic patients were tested. In the case of two German patients, the significant difference regarding correct aspect application was observed in the comprehension and two production tasks. Error analysis revealed that the Broca's aphasic patient committed errors of a morphological origin in the two production tasks, whereas the Wernicke's patient regularly confused aspect in both production tasks and in the comprehension one. Contrary to German results, two corresponding Broca's and Wernicke's Polish aphasics showed no significant error patterns in the oral production task. However, in the case of the Wernicke patient, the significant difference was noted for the aspect errors in the comprehension task.

Discussion: We believe that "aspect mixed up" phenomenon cannot be explained only in terms of the complexity of German verbal morphology since also the imperfective present forms were replaced by the morphologically more complex perfective items. On the other hand, the non-fluent patient who committed morphological errors, did not seem to have problems with the proper choice of aspect. In Polish, the erroneous aspect application continued through all the tasks only in the case of the Wernicke patient, which might imply rather (morpho)semantic than morphosyntactic problems with aspect differentiation in fluent aphasia.

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