

Leaman, M. C. (2025). “Quit treating me like a child, I don’t like it”: Partner cueing turns in conversation restrict language, while social turns facilitate self-expression; a case study of a man with severe Broca’s aphasia and his wife. *Aphasiology*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02687038.2025.2477014>

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

During conversation, partners of people with aphasia (PWA) often use phonemic/semantic cues and ask questions with known answers, with the goal to prompt the person to talk more. However, cued turns are usually structured to elicit single words, thereby limiting verbalization. This case study investigates the impact of partner cued and social turns during conversation on the language produced by Ben, a man with severe Broca’s aphasia.

Method

Ben and his wife Margo participated in three unstructured conversations, as part of pre-treatment testing during another study. They were asked to have casual conversations, similar to their everyday interactions. Margo spontaneously used a high frequency of both cueing turns and social turns, providing rich data for understanding the impact of these two conditions on Ben’s verbalizations. Margo’s turns were designated as either cued or social, and Ben’s subsequent turns in each condition were analyzed for form, content, and use. Margo’s turns were also analyzed for presence of negative judgement of Ben’s turns.

Results

In the social condition, Ben used a greater variety of semantic relations, pragmatic intents, and syntactic forms than in the cued condition. Margo used negative judgments for 35% of his utterances in the cued condition and for 3.4% of his utterances in the social condition.

Conclusions

Partners’ cueing turns can restrict verbalizations in people with nonfluent aphasia, contrary to the intent to encourage more language. Increasing awareness of how partner turn-types may influence language of PWA can support partners in making choices that facilitate language opportunities for PWA.