
A Comparison of Transactional Success in the Semi-Structured Conversation of Persons with Aphasia: Topic Constrained vs. Topic Unconstrained

**Katie Hauser, Gail Ramsberger &
Jacquie Kurland
University of Colorado at Boulder**

Statement of the Problem

- **Conversational competence** is a vital aspect of creating and maintaining a social support network, a significant factor contributing to reduced quality of life post-onset of aphasia (McIntosh, Ramsberger, & Prescott, 1996).
 - **Measuring transactional success** in conversations between persons with aphasia and non-aphasic partners is complex due to issues such as:
 - Length and complexity of collaborative repairs
 - Difficulty verifying accuracy of collaborative repairs
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A Measurement of Transactional Success

- **Ramsberger and Rende (2002)** developed a procedure that utilized topic constrained conversations to measure transactional success.
 - **Given the topic constraint**, the ecological validity of this measure needed to be established.
 - **This investigation compared the transactional success** of four participants from the Ramsberger and Rende (2002) study in **topic constrained vs. topic unconstrained semi-structured conversations**.
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METHODS

Participants with Aphasia:

Participant	Age	Months post onset	Gender	Aphasia Type	Medical Etiology	Aphasia Severity (ADP Std. Score)
1	55	21	Female	Mixed Non-fluent	L CVA	85
2	57	10	Female	Anomic	L CVA	109
3	55	64	Female	B'dln.Flu *	L CVA	92
4	26	47	Male	B'dln.Flu **	TBI	94

* Borderline fluent with poor repetition and poor auditory comprehension

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Non-aphasic Participants:

- 32 undergraduates from UC-Boulder Dept. of SLHS (22 female, 10 male)
- unpaid volunteers, naïve to study purpose, 20 – 28 y.o.

METHODS: Topic Constrained

Data Collection:

■ Instructions to Conversation Dyads:

*“ (Participant with Aphasia) has just watched an episode of I Love Lucy and this is going to be the topic of your conversation. You are free to use whatever means of communication works best for you. **Your collective success is going to be measured by how well (Non-aphasic Conversation Partner) can retell the I Love Lucy story.** When you both think you have exchanged all the information or when you both think you just aren't going to be able to exchange any more information, tell the camera person. Then the camera will be turned to (Non-aphasic Conversation Partner) and (she/he) will retell the story.”*



METHODS: Topic Constrained

Data Collection:

- **Lists of main ideas** generated for each *I Love Lucy* episode prior to collection of conversational data
- **Non-aphasic conversation partner's retellings** of the story was transcribed and evaluated for **number of correct ideas** expressed
- Point-to-point **inter-judge agreement** was **88%**



(Ramsberger & Rende, 2002)

METHODS: Topic Unconstrained

Data Collection:

- Designed to *simulate* natural conversations:
 - No topic imposed
 - Waiting room-like environment

■ Instructions to Conversation Dyads:

“I would like you to talk with each other for awhile, much like you would if you had met at a party or while waiting for an appointment. You are free to talk about anything that you like. If you feel uncomfortable or would like to stop just knock on the door.”

(all conversations were interrupted after 10 minutes)

METHODS: Topic Unconstrained

Coding:

- **Conversations were video recorded**
- **Eight volunteer raters** (UC-Boulder SLHS undergraduates) instructed to:

“rate the overall conversation based on the information conveyed between the two partners”

(Insert
Rating scale here)

METHODS: Topic Unconstrained

Inter-rater Reliability:

- **Seven of eight raters** demonstrated **93 %** agreement

(Insert Correlation Matrix here)

RESULTS

(Insert Table 3 here)

DISCUSSION

- **Rank order analysis of transactional success** in topic-constrained conversations demonstrated perfect correlation with that of topic-unconstrained conversations.
 - **This suggests that the measure of transactional success** developed by Ramsberger and Rende (2002), which utilizes only topic-constrained conversation, is nonetheless reflective of more naturalistic conversational interactions between persons with aphasia and unfamiliar partners.
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LIMITATIONS

- **Small sample size**
 - **Naturalness** of “topic unconstrained” conversations
 - **Rater responses to interactions vs. transactions**
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CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

- **Conversational competence** as a critical measure of functional outcomes
- **What else ?!?!?**



References

- McIntosh, K.W., Ramsberger, G., & Prescott, T.E. (1996). Relationships between and among language impairment, communication disability and quality of life outcome assessments in aphasic patients. *Brain & Language*, 55, 23-26.
 - Ramsberger, G., & Rende, B. (2002). Measuring transactional success in the conversation of people with aphasia. *Aphasiology*, 16, 337-353.
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