Assessment and therapy of narrative discourse in populations with language difficulties
PANEL ORGANISER & AFFILIATION
Lucy Dipper, City University of London, UK

Background

Discourse is essential for interaction and for the expression of ideas, feelings, and opinions, including telling personal stories, describing scenes, and giving instructions. Discourse difficulties are universal for clients with language pathologies, meaning that discourse is a common and increasing focus of clinical assessment and intervention. However, approaches to assessment & treatment in child and adult groups rarely intersect, with each field developing separately.

Purpose

This panel draws together international experts in discourse research, with combine expertise from a range of language pathologies. The aim is to summarise the current field and identify aspects of narrative discourse impairments which are identifiable across populations. The panel will outline theories of discourse organization which can account for these difficulties.

Method

The panel will be presented with a review of current approaches to discourse assessment & therapy. Methods for assessing and treating clients with a variety of language pathologies will be discussed, including adults with aphasia, children and adolescents with developmental language disorder (DLD), and deaf children. Across groups we will apply a common approach to identification of linguistic difficulties, explanation of their origin. and propose common therapy techniques.

Results

Children with DLD & adults with aphasia share common patterns of discourse impairment (e.g., shorter narratives, fewer complex sentences, less core information). In children with DLD, there are published assessments focusing on narrative discourse; in adults with aphasia, there is a broader range of discourse types used for assessment (narrative, procedural, picture description, personal). For both groups there is emerging evidence for effective intervention. The panel will share & discuss these

Conclusions

 Discourse assessment and treatment methods have significant areas of overlap and difference across client groups. Confining clinical and research work to a single client-group limits potential for growth.

SPEAKERS ON THE PANEL AND THEIR AFFILIATION
Professor Gary Morgan – City University of London; and Deafness Cognition and Language Research Centre, University College London
Professor Nicola Botting - City University of London; and the Manchester Language Study
Professor Victoria Joffe – City University of London; and ELCISS (Enhancing Language and Communication in Secondary Schools)

Professor Michael Robb – University of Canterbury, New Zealand
Dr Ros Herman – City University of London
Dr Bernard Camilleri – City University of London
Dr Lucy Dipper – City University of London
Dr Madeleine Pritchard – City University of London