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# Language Disorders in Frontotemporal Dementia

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The study of aphasia due to focal damage to the brain, typically stroke, has provided unique information about the organization of language in the brain. Progressive degenerative disorders represent another, complementary source of evidence for a number of reasons. In the first place, the investigation of language impairment in dementia provides a model of progressive dysfunction of the language network, which is clearly different from the sudden affect of an acute brain lesion. Second, dementing disorders represent probes of the language function of brain areas which are seldom involved by stroke, such as the anterior temporal lobe or the frontal poles. Many important contributions have derived from the study of Alzheimer's disease, which has provided evidence for the dissociation between phonological, syntactic and lexical-semantic processes. In recent years, a large number of investigations have dealt with the clinical and pathological spectrum of fronto-temporal dementia. In particular, semantic dementia has allowed important insights into the organization of semantic knowledge; progressive non fluent aphasia as well as the related conditions of progressive supranuclear palsy and corticobasal degeneration have provided new evidence about the mechanism underlying grammatical class effects and syntactic processing; the so-called "frontal variant", characterised by prominent behavioural symptoms has also confirmed the crucial role of prefrontal cortex in language and communication. It is thus clear that an in-depth evaluation of linguistic function in dementia, based on dedicated assessment tools, is not only a crucial component of the clinical examination, but also a source of research information which nicely complements the data provided by functional neuroimaging.