

Challenges for People with Acquired Language Disorders in an Increasingly Digital Social World



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Acquired Language Disorders



“Aphasia”

- About 85% of population has never heard the term “aphasia.”
- About 9% of people who have heard the term do not know it’s a language disorder.

An *acquired* language disorder affecting people who had attained full skill with their native language.



Most Common Cause of Aphasia

Strokes

Damage those areas of the brain subserving language.

Approximately 1/3 of all strokes result in aphasia.

75% of people having strokes are 65 years old and older



Depending on site and extent of damage within the brain's
“zone of language”, aphasia affects...

Production of...

- Oral language (speaking)
- Written language (writing)

Understanding ...

- Spoken language (auditory comprehension)
- Written language (reading)



Relevant to writing and reading...

Strokes causing aphasia may also cause:

- Paralysis or weakness of the right arm and leg.
- Inability to see the right side of space.



Aphasia is devastating.

Profound effect on the person's life...

- Employment
- Finances
- Maintenance of relationships with family and friends
 - Social isolation
 - Emotional distress
 - Depression



'The impact of aphasia on Internet and technology use'

Fiona Menger, [Julie Morris](#), [Christos Salis](#)

Disability and Rehabilitation, 2020 Oct;42(21):2986-2996.

Compared internet use in...

- 25 people with aphasia
- 17 people without aphasia.

Findings...

Aphasia negativity affects use and proficiency of the internet.

Other negative factors:

- age
- education
- previous use and experience with technology
- availability of proxies (people who could help with the processes)



National Aphasia Association

Website list of online aphasia communities and support groups:

- Aphasia Corner
- Faces of Aphasia
- Aphasia Will Not Be Silent
- Stroke Comeback Center
- Mindpop
- Speechless Mariah Rose's Ramblings
- (Facebook Group) Aphasia Recovery Connections



Online aphasia communities and support groups all require..

LANGUAGE

- Ability to write and read (all).
- Producing and understanding spoken messages (some).
- People with right-sided paralysis or weakness → only nondominant, left-hand for mechanics of typing.
- People with visual-field cuts → may not scan the entire screen.



Communicating Through Photos Despite Aphasia

Helm-Estabrooks N., Roe D., Whiteside J., Queen J., Drew R. Photography as a Means of Expression: Performance as Related to Aphasia Severity and Nonverbal Cognitive Status. Academy of Aphasia, Boston, MA October 20, 2009.

Whiteside, J., Helm-Estabrooks, N. , Pak Hin Kong, A. Roe, D. Queen, J., & Drew, R., The Photograph as Language: Workshops for People with Aphasia. *American Speech, Language, Hearing Association Convention*, Philadelphia, PA. ,November 20, 2010).

Over 5 billion people world-wide have mobile phones.

Many phones have a camera and can store photos in “albums”.



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"... the role of the Internet in people's lives is vital for the long-term rehabilitation of people with aphasia and particularly in enabling people with aphasia to live successfully with the condition, engaging in an ever more digital world."