Pictures without frames: Lexical bundles and multiword expressions in Dementia discourse

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'Do you know what happened on the way to work today?' 'Have you heard the latest about Peter?' When we want to introduce a story into a conversation, we usually introduce it with a frame. This alerts the listener that the speaker wishes to tell a story and indicates either that it is a totally new topic or that it is relevant to what has gone before. As Alzheimer's Disease progresses, speakers can find it increasingly difficult to use appropriate frames to introduce their stories. Instead they often launch into stories that seemingly bear no relation to what their conversation partner has said.

In this presentation we will examine 20 conversations between "Maureen Littlejohn" and two different types of conversation partners over 6 years: the first author and 17 undergraduate students. All conversation partners (CP) had the same brief: to engage Ms. Littlejohn in conversation. No topics or time limits were specified and the CP varied in their skill in eliciting conversation. Initially, Ms. Littlejohn could tie her stories into questions asked by her CP. In her last conversation with the first author, who was close to her in age, Ms. Littlejohn was still able to hold a 'normal' conversation, telling stories appropriately. However, her conversations with the students were different. Whereas she treated the first author as a friend (even though she could not remember her name), she felt she needed to entertain the students. She did this by telling and repeating 'performance' stories and phrases without any apparent link to the previous conversational content and without any introductory frame. We explore how the phrasing and the relevance of Ms. Littlejohn's stories changed across the 6 years of recorded conversations.

Speaker Biography

Boyd H Davis (UNC-Charlotte, USA) and Margaret Maclagan (retired, University of Canterbury, NZ) are linguists who have been collaborating and publishing research on discourse in dementia for the last twenty years. Their most recent articles appear in *Journal of Pragmatics*.

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