Segmentation tools for analyzing spoken discourse samples: Pitfalls and promises

Seminar Abstract: Since the 1980s researchers studying adult neurogenic discourse have used T-units as a tool for segmenting transcripts and as a dependent variable in and of itself. However, applying T-units to complex, interactional face-to-face spoken interaction is problematic. In this session, we will review this widely used tool—its history, its current use, and its practical and theoretical problems. Given that clinical or research goals are not always focused on syntactic complexity, clinicians and researchers need to have available to them other tools for segmenting transcripts and systematically tracking changes or differences across discourse samples. We will also examine other tools for segmenting talk that may be better suited for social or communicative analyses. Consistent with the ASHA scope of practice, which states that “the overall objective of speech-language pathology services is to optimize individuals' ability to communicate” and swallow, thereby improving quality of life” we believe that beginning assessment and treatment with a focus on communication and interaction will improve clinical outcomes and facilitate generalization.

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Presenters’ Selected Publications


TY: You know ‘cause that’s my baby. But .1. So now I threaten
M: Right. Right.
TY: to come to his school if he doesn’t do well.
M: Right. Right.
TY: I will walk down the hall with you. I will kiss you. [laughing .1.]
M: Michael’s mom. [laughing] [laughing]
TY: [laughing .1.] That doesn’t work either but. So it’s. Are you …
M: …3… Yeh.
TY: thinking of having kids soon? Starting to talk
M: ^^h Not soon but we’re s-.
TY: about it.
M: It’s been the first several months that we’ve been able to say like
TY: [laughs]
M: when we have kids and the other one not be like ^^h. Huh!
TY: [laughing .1.] They’re a lot of fun. So. I still think we’re … several years away.
M: Right
TY You know ‘cause that’s my baby.
M Right
TY But .1. So now I threaten to come to his school if he doesn’t do well
M Right Right
TY I will walk down the hall with you
M Right [laughing]
TY I will kiss you [laughing]
M Michael’s mom [laughing]
TY I will wipe stuff off your face. That doesn’t work either [laughing]
M Yeh
TY So it’s Are you … thinking of having kids soon?
M ^^h Not soon but we’re s-
TY Starting to talk about it
M It’s been the first several months that we’ve been able to say like when we have kids and the other one not be like ^^h, Huh
TY Kids. What?
M Wait, What are you saying [laughing]
TY A baby
M Right right
TY [laughing]
M So I still think we’re … several years away
TY They’re a lot of fun