

# Automated analysis of the semantics in narratives by persons with Primary Progressive Aphasia.

Anonymous ACL submission

## Abstract

We present a method to detect differences in the semantics of the spontaneous language of persons with separate primary progressive aphasia syndromes (PPA) using automated Information Control Unit derivation. The resulting semantic clusters are evaluated for their use in a predictive model to identify speakers with PPA. A prototype description is automatically generated based on a picture description by control speakers. Clustering is used to identify topics. The semantic distance between the prototype and language from persons with PPA is used to quantify the degree to which the language of persons with PPA deviates from normal language. A classifier is used to classify individual fragments.

The vocabulary of speakers with PPA is found to be less diverse in speakers with PPA. Different clusters are identified automatically that correspond with categories of objects and actions. In several clusters, speakers with PPA show deviations from the prototype. Random Forest classification out-performs baseline in control vs PPA and control vs svPPA vs nfvPPA tasks. Whereas nfvPPA is usually associated with speech motor problems, our study also finds their language deviating on the level of semantics.

## 1 Introduction

One of the clinical manifestations of dementia is a decline of the ability to use language. Problems with language have been reported in individuals with dementia caused by Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease or frontotemporal lobar degeneration. The term Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA; Mesulam 2001) is used to describe a neurodegenerative condition in which the primary, dominant symptom is a progressive language disorder.

Individuals with PPA form a subclass of individuals with either Frontotemporal dementia (FTD) or Alzheimer pathology (Rohrer et al., 2012). There is commonly a threeway distinction of PPA types, each with different linguistic characteristics: a *semantic* variant (svPPA; characterized by fluent but increasingly empty speech with affected naming and word comprehension), a *nonfluent* variant (nfvPPA; characterized by agrammatism and/or hesitant or labored speech / apraxia of speech) and a *logopenic* variant (lpvPPA; characterized by aphasia with anomia and difficulties with repetition of sentences or phrases).

There is a large variation of language deficits and atrophy patterns, both within each of the PPA subgroups and between them (Louwerseimer et al., 2016; Patterson et al., 2006; Thompson et al., 1997, 2012; Wilson et al., 2010, 2018). Some patients present with language problems even if they don’t yet meet the published guidelines for PPA; and some present with heterogeneous language problems and mixed phenotypical manifestations that do not clearly follow the threeway distinction.

One of the standard tasks in the clinical assessment of a person’s language is an analysis of their spontaneous speech and language, through stimuli that elicit connected speech (Boschi et al., 2017). The usual stimulus is an image that provides a visual context for a narrative. In most cases (e.g., Goodglass, 2000; Swinburn et al., 2004), the image is associated with Information Control Units (ICUs; Yancheva and Rudzicz 2016), usually human-supplied (hsICUs), which represents the objects, actions and causality relations of the figures in the image. Previous studies have found that the scoring of ICUs and their comparison to predefined hsICUs can indicate differences between the narratives from healthy persons and those

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083	with aphasia (Hier et al., 1985; Croisile et al.,	<b>2 Methods</b>	131
084	1996).		
085	As one of the defining characteristics of	<b>2.1 Participants</b>	132
086	svPPA is anomia, the typical scoring of ICUs	Language samples were collected from two dif-	133
087	for this group deviates, due to the difficulty	ferent groups of Dutch speaking participants:	134
088	with mapping an image's figures onto nouns	one group that served as a control group ( $n =$	135
089	and verbs (Bozeat et al., 2002; Garrard and Car-	15) and one group of participants with demen-	136
090	roll, 2006; Hoffman et al., 2013). Persons with	tia related brain damage ( $n = 16$ ), split evenly	137
091	nfvPPA have poorer fluency and reduced synt-	between nfvPPA and svPPA diagnosed. <sup>1</sup>	138
092	tax, however their ability to name things is rela-	Participants in the PPA groups were under	139
093	tively spared (Mancano and Papagno, 2023).	the care of neurologists at the Alzheimer Center	140
094	Analyses are usually based on multiple vari-	of the Amsterdam University Medical Center	141
095	ables measured in a transcription, at different	and part of the Amsterdam Dementia Cohort	142
096	levels of detail. Some variables require more	(Van der Flier et al., 2014). They were asked	143
097	language data for reliable analysis than others,	to participate after their clinical consultation	144
098	which impacts the required amount of effort	with a neurologist. Inclusion criteria were: able	145
099	(Ossewaarde et al., 2020). Transcribing what	to understand and follow the task instructions,	146
100	is said into individual tokens requires sufficient	and able to generate speech (ie: not mutistic).	147
101	knowledge of the spoken language to identify	The assessment of probable PPA was accord-	148
102	the words used by the speaker. The annota-	ing to the diagnostic criteria of Gorno-Tempini	149
103	tion of word categories and their meaning re-	et al. (2011). Their clinical workup followed a	150
104	quires knowledge of linguistic concepts (part-	standardized healthcare pathway that includes a	151
105	of-speech) and also consensus about the mean-	battery of diagnostic tests. In 12 cases amyloid	152
106	ing expressed by the words in the language.	biomarker assessment had taken place.	153
107	ICU analysis, the measurement of the distance	Participants in the control group were en-	154
108	between the language in the transcription and	rolled in a larger cohort of volunteer subjects	155
109	the ICUs, requires interpretation of what is said.	in brain research studies (Dutch Brain Re-	156
110	Manual annotation is labor intensive, expen-	search Registry; Zwan et al., 2021). They were	157
111	sive, and error prone. Automatic annotation	matched demographically by the selection al-	158
112	with software has been shown to be useful	gorithm of the registry. Control participants	159
113	for speech assessments in the context of other	were included when they were native speakers	160
114	forms of dementia (e.g. Robin et al., 2023).	of Dutch and had no history (self-reported) of	161
115	However, for PPA, it is still an open question	neurological or psychiatric disorders. Demo-	162
116	how specifically the changes in the semantics of	graphic characteristics are reported in Table 1.	163
117	the language can be recognized with software	<b>2.2 Elicitation</b>	164
118	such that human interpretation of the language	Spontaneous speech data was collected via the	165
119	is not necessary.	spontaneous speech task from the Comprehen-	166
120	Therefore, this study investigates the degree	sive Aphasia Test (CAT-NL, Swinburn et al.	167
121	to which the use of software can automate ICU	2004). The stimulus material consisted of an	168
122	analysis in such a way that machine learning	image portraying distinct elements, including a	169
123	models can detect whether a given speaker is	fish tank and an array of books, all of which are	170
124	from the PPA group or from the control group.	interlinked through a series of causal and con-	171
125	To this end, we set out to automatically analyze	sequential relationships. The participants were	172
126	fragments of semispontaneous, connected, spo-	directed to describe the picture with the verbal	173
127	ken Dutch language. Any positive result on the	prompts stipulated within the official guidelines	174
128	classification task would provide suggestions	of the CAT-NL. The assessment sessions with	175
129	for the way in which meaning expression can	participants in the svPPA and nfvPPA groups	176
130	be quantified in a diagnostic setting.		

<sup>1</sup>Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Ethical approval was determined exempt by the Medical Ethics Committee of the Amsterdam University Medical Center.

	control	nfvPPA	svPPA
Number of participants	15	8	8
Number of language samples	15	13	16
Persons:			
Women (%)	60.0	62.5	62.5
Samples:			
Women (%)	60	54	69
Months since symptom onset	n/a	35.9	34.6
Age at language recording	63.4 $\pm$ 8.4	66.7 $\pm$ 6.1	66.1 $\pm$ 3.0
MMSE	n/a	26.3 $\pm$ 1.4	27.5 $\pm$ 0.6

Data are shown as mean +/- standard deviation or frequency (%). Sample variables are computed at time of recording. Kruskal-Wallis test indicated no statistically significant different distributions with  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ . nfvPPA: nonfluent variant of PPA, svPPA: semantic variant of PPA, MMSE: Mini-mental State Examination score.

Table 1: Main clinical and demographic characteristics.

177	were conducted face-to-face within the clinical	on the Eindhoven Corpus <sup>2</sup> .	211
178	setting. Where possible, participants in these		
179	groups also contributed at follow-up visits. Ses-	<b>2.3.1 Comparison of transcripts to</b>	212
180	sions with control participants were held once	<b>prototype</b>	213
181	per participant. Language in these groups was	A statistical way of capturing the meaning of	214
182	elicited via video conferencing (Google Meet)	a word is through measurement of its similarity	215
183	due to social distancing measures at the time of	to other words in the same embedding context.	216
184	elicitation.	(Distributional Hypothesis; <a href="#">Sahlgren, 2008</a> ). In	217
185	Some participants from the patient groups	practice, word embeddings are represented by a	218
186	contributed samples at followup visits. Samples	vector with enough dimensionality to be infor-	219
187	were assumed to be independent data points,	mative enough. Vectors are computed through	220
188	given that the time between tests was suffi-	large scale corpus analysis, resulting in either	221
189	ciently large to exclude memory effects (> 90	context independent word vectors (one vector	222
190	days), and given the relatively heterogeneous	for <i>left</i> in “the <b>left</b> side was <b>left</b> unpainted”;	223
191	character of the disease, which negatively af-	word2vec models; <a href="#">Mikolov et al., 2017</a> ) or con-	224
192	fects the correlation that can be expected be-	text dependent word vectors (two vectors for	225
193	cause samples are produced by the same indi-	<i>left</i> in the same example; BERT models; <a href="#">De-</a>	226
194	vidual.	<a href="#">vlin et al., 2019</a> ). Word embeddings have been	227
195	<b>2.3 Transcription and linguistic analysis</b>	shown to adequately capture the similarity of se-	228
196	At transcription, the starts and ends of the	mantically similar words, thus acting as a proxy	229
197	recordings of participants were manually	for the truth-conditional meaning of that sense	230
198	trimmed so that only the audio of the CAT-NL	of the word. The use of vectors allows a natural	231
199	spontaneous speech task resulted. The start	way to study the relatedness of the words that	232
200	condition was the moment that the interviewer	persons use in the retelling of a narrative.	233
201	finished the instructions to the participant. The	We use a monolingual Dutch transformer-	234
202	end condition was the signal from the partici-	based pre-trained language model (BERTje; <a href="#">de</a>	235
203	part that the storytelling was over.	<a href="#">Vries et al., 2019</a> ) to map tokens to embeddings.	236
204	The tokens in the spoken fragments were	The context dependent nature of BERTje means	237
205	transcribed in a broad transcription, with spe-	that semantic similarity comparisons of abso-	238
206	cial markings for filled pauses ( <i>ehl</i> and <i>ehml</i> ).	lute values are less robust on the word level	239
207	There was no separate tier to transcribe tempo-	because contextual information influences the	240
208	ral properties or (morpho-)syntax.	relatedness values.	241
209	Part of speech tags were assigned automati-		
210	cally by RNNTagger ( <a href="#">Schmid, 2019</a> ) trained		

<sup>2</sup>Eindhoven-corpus (Version 2.0.1) (2014) [Data set]. Available at the Dutch Language Institute: <http://hdl.handle.net/10032/tm-a2-n6>

242	BERT-like models boosts their performance	294
243	for out-of-vocabulary words by computing em-	295
244	beddings on the sub-word level ('embedding'	296
245	is represented as ['em' 'bed' 'ding']). Out-	297
246	of-vocabulary words include neologisms and	298
247	phonological paraphasias. In this study, we	299
248	matched what is tokenized by BERTje with the	300
249	tokens processed by the Stanford parser to en-	301
250	sure the correct alignment of sub-word tokens	302
251	with words in in the transcript.	303
252	The embeddings are used to create a proto-	304
253	type of the picture description, based on the	305
254	language of healthy speakers. The prototype	
255	is then used to investigate to what extent the	
256	divergence from the prototype is indicative of	
257	aphasia caused by PPA.	
258	All content words (nouns, verbs) of the con-	
259	trol speakers were clustered jointly based on	
260	their similarity scores. Similarity scores were	
261	derived from the hidden layers of the pretrained	
262	BERTje vectors through summation of the last	
263	four layers. The Elbow method (Satopaa et al.,	
264	2011) was used to determine the optimum num-	
265	ber of clusters, optimizing for the lowest WCSS	
266	(distortion) score. The average optimal WCSS	
267	scores were found to be at $k = 12$ clusters.	
268	Because high dimension data sets can en-	
269	code its information in such a sparse way that	
270	subsequent clustering suffers in terms of perfor-	
271	mance, it is standard practice to apply a dimen-	
272	sionality reduction step as part of preprocessing	
273	before clustering. We applied the Uniform Man-	
274	ifold Approximation & Projection algorithm	
275	(UMAP; McInnes et al., 2018).	
276	The data pipeline is illustrated in Figure 1.	
277	The clustered space may be considered as	
278	a prototype: it is the summation of all con-	
279	tent words used by control speakers clustered	
280	around centers that represent a dimension in	
281	the conceptual space. Each of the speaker's	
282	descriptions of the picture is a variant on the	
283	prototype. The distance of each of the content	
284	terms of each speaker to the cluster centers was	
285	computed to yield a fingerprint for the relation	
286	between prototype and variant as follows:	
287	Each token that a participant uses is labeled	
288	as belonging to a cluster of the prototype. The	
289	<i>mean average distance</i> to each cluster is a mea-	
290	sure for the semantic closeness to that cluster.	
291	If a cluster is about a specific concept that is	
292	part of the picture, such as the fish tank or	
293	the books in the picture of the CAT, then any	
	speaker should be expected to also use words	294
	relating to those categories. If the speaker uses	295
	different but semantically similar terms, then	296
	the distance will be higher, but still closer than	297
	if a speaker uses semantically vague terms.	298
	The labels of the words spoken by the par-	299
	ticipant form a bag (multiset). Comparison be-	300
	tween the bag of unique labels spoken by the	301
	participant to the bag of labels in the prototype	302
	is quantified using the <i>Tversky index</i> , which is	303
	a widely used asymmetric similarity measure	304
	for comparison of a variant to a prototype.	305
	$S(A, B) = \frac{ A \cap B }{ A \cap B  + \alpha B - A  + \beta A - B }$	306
	(Tversky index)	307
	Because the clusters of the variant are a priori	308
	derived from the prototype, the $\alpha$ parameter -	309
	a multiplier for the number of clusters in the	310
	variant that do not occur in the prototype - is	311
	necessarily zero. The $\beta$ parameter was set to	312
	1. The index that we use is insensitive to the	313
	number of times that a person mentions the	314
	same topic.	315
	The number of words assigned to each clus-	316
	ter is an indication of the semantic fingerprint	317
	of the speaker's narrative. Between group com-	318
	parisons are performed using one-way ANOVA	319
	tests.	
	<b>2.4 Classification</b>	320
	A Random Forest Classifier (Breiman, 2001)	321
	was used to classify the participants. The inde-	322
	pendent variables were: the Tversky index, the	323
	frequency of each cluster label, and the aver-	324
	age distance of the tokens to the cluster centers.	325
	The dependent variable was either the binary	326
	distinction <i>control</i> versus <i>patient</i> or the ternary	327
	distinction <i>control</i> versus <i>nfvPPA</i> versus <i>svPPA</i> .	328
	The cross-validation performance was used to	329
	tune the model. The number of trees was cho-	330
	sen as 100, with no constraints on the maximum	331
	depth of the tree. To evaluate the model, the	332
	out-of-sample performance was estimated us-	333
	ing leave-one-out cross validation. Scoring of	334
	the classifier is reported using the balanced ac-	335
	curacy metric.	336
	<b>3 Results</b>	337
	The clusters and English translations of their	338
	tokens are reported in Appendix A. Their rel-	339
	ative contributions are visualized in Figure 2.	340



Figure 1: The pipeline from transcription to prediction

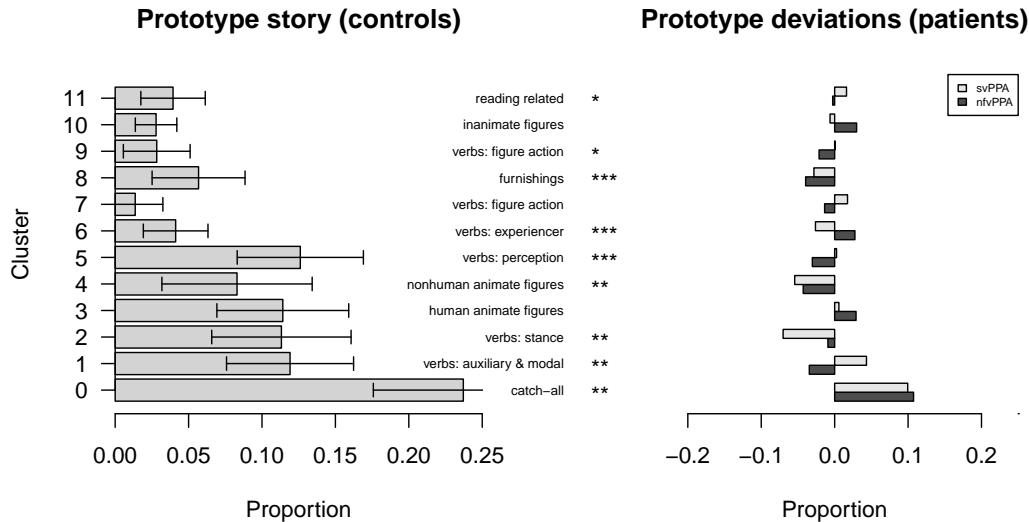


Figure 2: Relative contributions of clusters to the CAT-NL story.

341 The silhouette coefficient plot in Figure 3 visu- 366  
 342 alizes the relationship between tokens and their 367  
 343 assigned clusters.

344 The k-means algorithm, due to its determin- 368  
 345 istic character and its assumption of centers 369  
 346 in spherical clusters, will always classify data, 370  
 347 even words that are noise. Cluster 0 is the 371  
 348 largest cluster in terms of number of different 372  
 349 words, and the most heterogeneous. Both hu- 373  
 350 man inspection and the negative coefficient in 374  
 351 the silhouette plot for this cluster suggest that 375  
 352 this is the default cluster which is assigned to 376  
 353 words that do not clearly belong to any of the 377  
 354 other clusters. 378

355 Cluster 1 contains verbs that usually func- 379  
 356 tion as auxiliaries or modals. Clusters 2, 7 and 380  
 357 9 mostly contain the verbs that describe the 381  
 358 action in the image, with one cluster (cluster 382  
 359 2) particularly associated with verbs of stance. 383  
 360 Two clusters contain human and nonhuman ani- 384  
 361 mate figures respectively (clusters 3 and 4); 385  
 362 one cluster (10) contains most of the inanimate 386  
 363 figures that occur in the image. 387

364 Narratives from the nfvPPA group show sig- 388  
 365 nificantly less words in almost all the clusters 389

366 which is indicative of the generally shorter and 367  
 368 more effortful speech in that group.

369 The comparison between participant groups 370  
 371 for both the Tversky index variable and the 372  
 373 absolute set size of each cluster is reported in 374  
 375 Table 2. Except for clusters 3, 7 and 10, there 376  
 377 are significant differences between each of the 378  
 379 groups. 380

381 Cluster 0 is the largest cluster in terms of 382  
 383 words, and the most heterogeneous. Both hu- 384  
 385 man inspection and the negative coefficient in 386  
 387 the silhouette plot for this cluster suggest that 388  
 389 this is the default cluster which is assigned to 390  
 390 words that don't clearly belong to any of the 391  
 392 other clusters. Cluster 1 contains verbs that 392  
 393 usually function as auxiliaries or modals. 393

394 Both svPPA and nfvPPA group speakers pro- 395  
 396 duce relatively more words in cluster 0, the 396  
 397 cluster with the most semantically distant (un- 397  
 398 related or vaguer) words. Both groups produce 398  
 399 relatively fewer words in clusters 4 and 8, which 399  
 400 contains the nonhuman animate figures and fur- 400  
 401 nishings respectively. 401

402 Concerning verbs, nfvPPA speakers use 403  
 404 fewer auxiliary and modal verbs (cluster 1) and 404



Figure 3: Silhouette plot of the clusters with their average silhouette score.

391 verbs that relate to what happens in the figure  
 392 (clusters 5, 9). They use more verbs that relate  
 393 to how they interpret the image (think, suspect;  
 394 cluster 6). SvPPA speakers use more auxiliary  
 395 verbs (cluster 1), fewer verbs that describe the  
 396 stance of the figures in the image (cluster 2) and  
 397 fewer verbs that relate to how they interpret the  
 398 image (cluster 6).

399 The emerging semantic profile of the nfvPPA  
 400 group is that of a narrative that has words for  
 401 the humans in the figure and their stance actions  
 402 in similar proportions as that of control speak-  
 403 ers. However, the description of non-human  
 404 animate figures (fish, cat, (teddy) bear, plant)  
 405 and of furnishings are sparser, as well as their  
 406 use of auxiliary verbs that are typically used  
 407 in grammatically more complex expressions.  
 408 Their language contains more words that are  
 409 semantically remote from the prototype.

410 The svPPA group uses more auxiliary verbs  
 411 and more words that are semantically remote.  
 412 The typical difficulty with naming that devel-  
 413 ops over time in this group manifests through  
 414 a smaller proportion of words assigned to the  
 415 clusters with more extensional meaning (fewer  
 416 words in clusters 2, 4, 6, 8, 11). The profile of  
 417 this narrative fits the description of relatively  
 418 intact syntax, but difficulties in recalling the  
 419 specific words.

### 420 3.1 Results of the classification of 421 individuals

422 The per-class results of the classification are  
 423 summarized as confusion matrices in Tables 3a  
 424 and 3b for the two and three class classifiers

425 respectively. The observed performance is re-  
 426 ported in Table 4. In both tasks, the classifi-  
 427 cation performed significantly better than the  
 428 baseline strategy of predicting the most fre-  
 429 quent label.

## 430 4 Discussion

431 In this paper, we set out to quantify the degree  
 432 to which the semantic content of a narrative by  
 433 PPA participants differs from that by control  
 434 speakers. In our methodology, we did not iden-  
 435 tify any topics a priori (hsICU), but rather used  
 436 software to create a prototype from the narra-  
 437 tives of controls, and then measured how the  
 438 speech of PPA diverges.

439 One major finding is that the Tversky mea-  
 440 sure for both the svPPA and nfvPPA stories is  
 441 significantly lower than that of control stories,  
 442 with the nfvPPA group scoring lowest. The  
 443 lower Tversky index for patient group speakers  
 444 indicates that these speakers used relatively less  
 445 distinct words to describe the story than speak-  
 446 ers from the control group. This indicates that  
 447 the vocabulary that is used by these speakers  
 448 shows less variation, which relates to the gen-  
 449 eral finding that vocabulary creativity decreases  
 450 under the influence of PPA (Fraser et al., 2014).  
 451 For nfvPPA participants, semantic effects are  
 452 a surprising finding, given that nfvPPA is usu-  
 453 ally associated with effortful speech, in some  
 454 cases caused by speech motor problems (Pri-  
 455 mary Progressive Apraxia of Speech, PPAOS;  
 456 Duffy, 2006). In our grouping of participants,  
 457 we did not subdivide the participants of the  
 458 nfvPPA group, therefore categorizing nfvPPA

Group	Tversky $\mu$ ( $\sigma$ )	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Control	0.96 (0.03)	21.33	11.00	9.40	9.40	7.60	10.87	3.27	1.33	4.20	2.40	2.13	3.20
nfvPPA	0.77 (0.16)	11.00	3.00	3.75	4.67	1.83	3.58	1.92	0.00	0.83	0.33	1.92	1.33
svPPA	0.85 (0.17)	26.69	14.50	4.06	10.06	3.00	10.00	1.19	1.94	2.19	2.25	1.62	1.88

Table 2: The Tversky index and number of tokens assigned to each cluster. Alpha-values for significance: '\*\*': 0.05, '\*\*\*': 0.01, '\*\*\*\*': 0.001.

(a) 2-class clustering				(b) 3-class clustering			
Prediction	Actual value			Prediction	Actual value		
	Control	PPA			Control	nfvPPA	svPPA
Control	12	3		Control	12	0	3
PPA	0	26		nfvPPA	2	9	1
				svPPA	0	1	15

Table 3: Confusion matrices for 2 and 3-class clustering.

Task	Accuracy	Precision	F1
2-class: control vs. PPA	0.77	0.81	0.80
3-class: control vs. nfvPPA vs. svPPA	0.70	0.71	0.71

Table 4: Observed performance of the Random Forest Classifier for the two classification tasks. The accuracy reported is the balanced accuracy, the average of recall obtained on each class. The scores for precision and F1 are micro averaged.

459 with PPAS in the same group as those without.

460 The clustering based on embeddings allows  
461 further introspection of the differences between  
462 the participant groups. Combining the Tversky  
463 findings and the cluster comparisons yields a  
464 quantification of the nfvPPA narratives as con-  
465 taining less content words in general (lowest  
466 Tversky index), and svPPA narratives as con-  
467 taining relatively more general nouns and verbs.

468 Our methodology shows how the contents of  
469 a story can be analyzed in an automatic way.  
470 We identified ICU's that should occur in a pic-  
471 ture description through an automated analy-  
472 sis of descriptions by healthy speakers. This  
473 is an alternative to the approach in which hu-  
474 mans predefine the elements, as in the hsICU  
475 approach that is often used in the field. One  
476 advantage of the use of software is that it scales  
477 well, even if narratives become longer or cover  
478 topics that are less predefined as those in a pic-  
479 ture task.

480 In our approach, we used verbs and nouns, as  
481 these add most of the truth-conditional seman-  
482 tical content. The implication of our results  
483 is that persons with nfvPPA have less prob-  
484 lems finding content words but produce less lan-  
485 guage overall, and that persons with svPPA will  
486 use content words that are emptier in meaning.

487 The classification results indicate that verbs and  
488 nouns alone are informative enough to result in  
489 a classification between the groups. However,  
490 one aspect of the task is that of the causality  
491 between different elements in the picture. Al-  
492 though classification without the causality ele-  
493 ment is already promising, future research may  
494 target a way to also include words that describe  
495 the causality relation, such as subordinating  
496 conjunctions or prepositional phrases (*because,*  
497 *then*).

498 BERT models encode features such as famil-  
499 iarity, age-of-acquisition, frequency, and con-  
500 creteness internally into their vector representa-  
501 tions. These features have been shown individ-  
502 ually to be predictive for the selective loss of  
503 concepts in persons with PPA. The black box  
504 nature of Transformer models does not allow  
505 direct introspection of the importance of such  
506 features for the classification prediction. Fu-  
507 ture research may focus on post hoc analyses of  
508 such features in the clusters that influence the  
509 classification.

510 BERTje embeddings are context dependent.  
511 For some tasks, context independent embed-  
512 dings, generated by more traditional dictionary  
513 approaches (such as Word2Vec and GloVE;  
514 (Pennington et al., 2014)), perform as well as

515	context dependent ones (e.g., <a href="#">Arora et al. 2020</a> ).	565
516	The prediction is that context dependent models	566
517	fare better when the language has more com-	567
518	plex structure, more ambiguity in its word us-	568
519	age and contains more Out of Vocabulary words.	569
520	This is relevant for the application to persons	570
521	with language problems because their language	571
522	is often marred by syntactic problems or word	572
523	finding problems.	573
524	The hyperparameters in the dimensionality	574
525	reduction dictate the performance of the algo-	575
526	rithm, especially the selection of the number of	576
527	clusters. Although the parameter setting was	577
528	governed by best practices, a different choice	578
529	for the number of clusters may result in a clus-	579
530	tering of the labels that is more aligned with	580
531	human intuitions. The silhouette visualization	581
532	(cf. Figure 3) indicates a good convergence of	582
533	all clusters except for cluster 0, which is the	583
534	catch-all cluster for words. Participants in the	584
535	svPPA group use a significantly higher number	585
536	of words related to this cluster, which indicates	586
537	a strategy of replacing target words with more	587
538	general counterparts.	588
539	Because no topics have been identified a pri-	589
540	ori, our methodology can be seen as agnostic	590
541	about the stimulus that is used to elicit the nar-	591
542	ratives. It scales to other narratives and to other	592
543	languages, under the condition that pretrained	593
544	embeddings are available.	594
545	<b>5 Limitations</b>	595
546	Words that have no truth-conditional semantics	596
547	(such as pronouns) are not included in the clus-	597
548	tering. It is expected that nfvPPA participants	598
549	use more frequently constructions that are more	599
550	referential ( <a href="#">Çokal et al., 2018</a> ); our methodol-	600
551	ogy yields no further insight in the usage of	601
552	such words, but see [citation: name deleted to	602
553	maintain review integrity] for an analysis of	603
554	word usage differences between the groups of	
555	this study.	
556	Our choice of dimensionality reduction algo-	
557	rithm and subsequent k-means classification	
558	is partly inspired by the white box properties	
559	of these algorithms ( <a href="#">Leijnen et al., 2020</a> ). It is	
560	possible that other AI methods (such as artifi-	
561	cial neural networks) show better performance,	
562	even though our training set is relatively mod-	
563	est.	
564	The expression of meaning through embed-	
	dings carries the same bias as the training data	604
	used to generate the embeddings. Our expect-	605
	ation is that the choice of embedding model	606
	is relatively insignificant, given the nature of	607
	the analyzed texts: for the specific image in	608
	this task, descriptions are expected to contain	609
	mostly high frequency vocabulary items that	610
	name everyday things. One form of bias is	611
	significant for applications in healthcare: the	612
	training data for BERT data is derived from	613
	large scale corpora, with demographics of the	614
	speakers regressing towards the mean of the	
	general population. Persons with PPA are gen-	
	erally older. Language production declines with	
	age, even in healthy speakers ( <a href="#">Kemper, Thomp-</a>	
	<a href="#">son, and Marquis, 2001</a> ). In our study, we use	
	a task and a stimulus specifically designed for	
	this target population; however, when extend-	
	ing our methodology towards stimuli with more	
	freedom, care must be taken that the bias of the	
	trained embeddings does not translate into bias	
	effects in the analysis.	
	The pipeline includes Dutch specific ele-	
	ments: the parser and the embedding model.	
	Because the quality of the subsequent analysis	
	depends on the quality of the software elements	
	for that language, scaling to other languages is	
	not a given, unless similar resources are avail-	
	able. Some approaches to developing BERT	
	models actively include multiple languages in	
	the same model (e.g. multilingual BERT; <a href="#">Wu</a>	
	<a href="#">and Dredze 2020</a> ). The assumption is that some	
	linguistic constructs are shared between lan-	
	guages, and so that the training effort of multi-	
	ple languages combined is less than a per lan-	
	guage training approach. The high interest in	
	embeddings for different languages bodes well	
	for the ability to scale our approach to other	
	languages.	
	<b>6 Conclusion</b>	
	The use of parsing software combined with pre-	
	trained embeddings can aid in the analysis of	
	spontaneous speech. In this study, we classi-	
	fied participants between control and PPA, and	
	between the control and two of the three dom-	
	inant subtypes of PPA, with a high degree of	
	confidence. The classification is based on a	
	comparison to the language of healthy persons,	
	which makes the method cost effective and ag-	
	nostic of predefined	



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## A Clusters and the words they contain.

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Clusters and English translations of the words they contain. Stars indicate significant deviations in absolute word counts with arrows indicating the deviation direction. The cluster labels were assigned post hoc by the authors.

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Cluster	Tokens		nfvPPA vs control	svPPA
0 **	attention, number, picture, alcohol, busy, fold, holes, effect, speak, ...	<i>catch-all category</i>	↑	↑
1 **	will, must, have, was, wants, succeeds, happens, would, gets, have, has, knows, is, seems, lets, been, am, causes, us, may, goes, finds, can, will, tried, give, comes, can	<i>auxiliary &amp; modal verbs</i>	↓	↑
2 **	lay, falls, sit, stand, hang, lays, hangs, placed, stands, happens, fall, sits	<i>figure stance verbs</i>		↓
3	family, little, granddaughter, girl, dad, young, mister, small, child-, girl, on, daughter, children, daddy, child, father, man	<i>animate human figures</i>	↑	↑
4 **	cat, teddy bear, fish (pl), fish (sg), gold fish, plant, cat	<i>animate non-human figures</i>	↓	↓
5 ***	see, watch, look, find	<i>perception verbs</i>	↓	
6 ***	think, suspect	<i>experiencer verb</i>	↑	↓
7	awake, become, tell, receive, fishing, hit, do, say, pull, make, take, comes, getting, point, catch, fall, interfere, fell, placed, care, fetch, wake, holes, throw, hear, want, warn, can	<i>figure action verbs</i>	↓	↑
8 ***	curtain, living room, table, armchair, cabinets, wall, ground, small table, chair, window, floor, upper, cabinet, shelf, coffee table, dresser, window sill, paper, walls, couch, living room, stack	<i>furnishings</i>	↓	↓
9 *	awake, plays, lays, occupied, warns, want, happens, sleep, tries, sleeping, sit, about to, points, put, holds, asks, says, plays, seems, does, comfortable, try, stay, hunts, sits, sleeps, baby sits, peaceful, light	<i>figure action verbs</i>	↓	
10	cd, living room, alcohol, audio, table, booze, plays, video, takes record, plant, empty, toy, window, speaker, vase, wine, doll, door, nice, salon, bottle, stereo, glass, pane, panes, little jar, little glass, flower, music, box, drank, cognac, house, drill, sound-, liquor, windows, stack, radio	<i>inanimate figures</i>	↑	
11 *	read, books	<i>about reading</i>		↑

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