Recurring utterances

Recurring utterances typically refer to phrases, words, or expressions that are repeated in speech or writing. These can appear in various contexts, such as conversations, literature, public speaking, or even computational models.

Types and Examples

Conversational Utterances

In everyday dialogue, people often repeat certain phrases for emphasis or habit, like:

"You know what I mean?"

"At the end of the day..."

These can signal style, personality, or cultural context.

Literary Utterances

In literature, recurring utterances often appear as motifs or themes.

Example: Repetition of "Nevermore" in Edgar Allan Poe's The Raven.

They contribute to rhythm, mood, or symbolism.

Public Speaking or Media

Politicians or public figures use recurring phrases for branding or emphasis.

Example: Barack Obama often repeated, "Yes, we can."

This technique reinforces key messages.

Computational Utterances

In chatbots or AI, recurring utterances might arise from default responses or training data. Example: Repeated prompts like "Can I help you with anything else?" signal transition points in dialogue.

Why Do Recurring Utterances Occur?

Memory and Habit: Familiarity makes certain phrases easier to recall and use.

Rhetorical Effect: Repetition aids in persuasion or impact.

Cultural or Social Influence: Language patterns reflect societal norms or trends.

Technological Design: In AI, these are often programmed patterns or limitations in diversity generation.

Recurring utterances (RUs) are a distinct language symptom observed in severe aphasia, known to be associated with global or Broca's aphasia, though their neural basis remains unclear. Kakinuma et al. present a case of RU induced by selective left frontal suppression using a novel technique named the super-selective Wada test (ssWada), which involves temporary anesthetization of specific brain regions through super-selective catheterization of cerebral arteries. This method allows for precise simulation of localized brain dysfunction. They applied this technique on a 49-year-old right-handed man with drug-resistant epilepsy as a preoperative examination. Propofol administration to the superior branch of the left middle cerebral artery (MCA), supplying the pars triangularis, pars opercularis, middle frontal gyrus, and part of the precentral gyrus, induced Broca's aphasia with RUs. The RU content was the phrase uttered at anesthesia administration. Notably, the anesthetic did not affect the temporal language area or basal ganglia. The patient showed minimal awareness of his abnormal speech despite preserved receptive language function and memory, aligning with previous observations of anosognosia in patients with RU. Contrastingly, anesthetic infusion into the inferior branch of the left MCA resulted in mixed aphasia, while right MCA infusion induced no language impairments. This case demonstrates that RUs can arise without deficits in the posterior language area or basal ganglia. It illustrates the potential of ssWada in investigating neural substrates of neuropsychological symptoms through temporary, localized brain disruption. This approach offers novel insights into brain-behavior relationships in language processing and cognition¹⁾.

Patients operated on stereotactically in the ventrolateral thalamic structures show after stimulation or following the operation some disturbances which apparently interfere with cerebral speech mechanisms, i.e. speech arrest, word iterations or recurring utterances, lack of initiative to speak, hypoprosodia, change of the speed of enunciation. These phenomena rather concern motor processes, the initiation of speech, the maintenance and control of speech, fluency and volume. They may occur after lesions or stimulations in any of both hemispheres, however, there is a clear preponderance after lesions or stimulations on the left side. Dysphasic disturbances were observed only as transient phenomena. One can conclude that in this case thalamotomy influences the function of the dominant cortical regions for language rather than subcortical structures concerned with speech function. Differences in verbally expressed cognition between subjects with left-sided and right-sided ventrolateral thalamotomy can be observed, not only in the immediate post-operative period, but also after a much longer interval ²

1)

Kakinuma K, Osawa SI, Kikuchi H, Katsuse K, Ishida M, Ukishiro K, Jin K, Kayano S, Mugikura S, Endo H, Nakasato N, Matsuda M, Suzuki K. Recurring utterances induced by local anesthetic administration to the left frontal lobe. Cortex. 2024 Nov 19;183:15-20. doi: 10.1016/j.cortex.2024.10.019. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39608047.

2)

Petrovici JN. Speech disturbances following stereotaxic surgery in ventrolateral thalamus. Neurosurg Rev. 1980;3(3):189-95. doi: 10.1007/BF01647128. PMID: 7022262.

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