

Aphasia Insights!

July 2023
Volume 5, Issue 12
July 11, 2023

“I fail to see why the wisdom which is the precipitate on man’s common experience of life should be refused inclusion among the acquisitions of science. The essential character of scientific work derives not from the special nature of its objects of study but from its stricter method of establishing the facts and its search for far-reaching correlations” (pp. 207).

Freud, Sigmund. The Psychopathology of Everyday Life. Translated by James Strachey. W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London (1901/1960).

Aphasia Nation, Inc. is committed to educating the wider public about stroke and aphasia and the “*Aim High for Aphasia!*” international Aphasia Awareness campaign.

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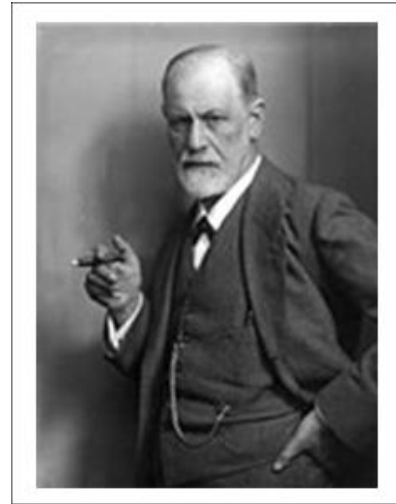
Sigmund Freud: On Aphasia and Early Aphasiologist.

By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.

This is the next in a series of articles about the science and scientists behind the brain, stroke, aphasia, plasticity and recovery.

Sigmund Freud (born Sigismund Schlomo Freud) (6 May 1856 – 23 September 1939) was

an Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis, a clinical method for evaluating and treating mental illnesses from conflicts in the psyche, through dialogue between patient and psychoanalyst ([Wikipedia](#)).



Sigmund Freud
(1856 – 1939)

Freud was born to Galician Jewish parents in the Moravian town of Freiberg. He was born with a caul, which was seen as a sign of good luck that his mother, Amalia, thought was a positive omen for his future. He was an outstanding student, loved literature, and read all of Shakespeare’s plays. He was proficient in German, French, Italian, Spanish, English, Hebrew, Latin and Greek.

Freud and his family moved to Vienna when he was four years old and never wanted to leave until having to escape from the Nazis in 1938. He went to

London “to die in freedom” in 1939 (Freud, 1960).

He qualified as a doctor of medicine in 1881 at the University of Vienna. Upon completing his education in 1885 he was appointed a docent in neuropathology and became an affiliated professor in 1902.

Having set up his clinical practice in 1886, Freud lived and worked in Vienna until the German annexation of Austria in March 1938 ([Wikipedia](#)).

Freud took great interest in mental

processes that included cerebral palsy and aphasia. He researched the anatomy of the brain and neurological deficits from 1877 to 1888 (Solms, 2002).

Freud wrote On Aphasia, A Critical Study (1891) which was his first book before he shifted to psychoanalysis.

He coined the word agnosia, the inability to process sensory information.

As famous as he was, few people have heard of On Aphasia. It was first published in German in 1891 and was translated into English and published in 1953. Only 142 copies were sold in the first year and 115 in the following nine years (Freud, 1953).

In On Aphasia, Freud wrote that the theories about aphasia needed to be

updated and he considered that “the best brains of German and foreign neurology have already devoted their efforts ([Wernicke](#), [Kussmaul](#), [Lichtheim](#), and [Grashley](#), [Hughlings Jackson](#), [Bastian](#), and [Ross](#), [Charcot](#) and others) ... to demonstrate that the theory of aphasia jointly built up by the above-named writers, contain two assumptions which might profitably be revised” (Freud, 1953).

The first assumption “refers to the differentiation between aphasias caused by destruction of *centres* and aphasias caused by destruction of *pathways*” (*italics added*) (Freud, 1953).

The scientists were trying to locate the physical damage connected to the symptoms of the damage and were unsure if the physical damage was located at the source or on the pathway transmitting the messages.

The second assumption was concerned “with the topographical relationship between individual speech centres ... related to ... ‘localization’, i.e., of the restriction of nervous functions to anatomically definable areas” (Freud, 1953).

Modern scientists still refer to language centers of Broca’s area (expressive) and Wernicke’s area (receptive) but based on historical critique, including Jackson, Freud and others, indicate that the “significance of the factor of localization for aphasia has been overrated, and that we should be well advised once again to concern ourselves with the functional states of the apparatus of speech” (Freud, 1953).

Freud focused on brain *function* rather than brain *structure* and remarked that

an American neurologist, [Allen Starr](#), (1854-1932) “arrived at the conclusion that this symptom could be produced by lesions of a great variety of localization” and found that it was “impossible to establish a consistent difference in the pathology of cases of sensory aphasia with or without paraphasia” (Freud, 1953).

Freud agreed and commented that an attempt to “explain the variety of speech disorders observed by differences in the localization of the lesions only, would have to confine itself to assuming a number of centres and tracts functioning independently and equally liable to be put out of action” (Freud, 1953).

Freud fully appreciated Hughlings Jackson’s discussions about the difficulty of understanding both the localization and the diffusion component of language.

As Jackson said, “Whilst I believe that the hinder part of the left frontal convolution is the part most often damaged, I do not localise speech in any such small part of the brain. To locate the damage which destroys speech and to localise speech are two different things” ([Brain, 1915, pp. 81](#), [Head, 2014/1926, pp. 50](#)).

The world adopted Sigmund Freud’s theories and memes including the Oedipus complex, slips of the tongue, repression, libido, and dreams for over a hundred years.

Yet once his later thoughts and publications took hold, it almost obscured his decade of research and writing about the brain and aphasia that provided “valuable contributions to neurology” that “laid the foundations of

psychoanalysis” that came later (Freud, 1953).

Signed: *The Johnny Appleseed of Aphasia Awareness*

The author is a three-time stroke survivor and aphasia. He could not read, write or speak well and it took him years to recover.

He is Founder and President, Aphasia Nation, Inc., a non-profit organization whose mission is educating the wider public, national and international, about aphasia and plasticity, the foundation of all learning.

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