

Abstract

Event schemas, scripts organized hierarchically in semantic memory for activities, of Alzheimer's disease (AD) patients were examined. In the current study, the script for dining at a sit-down restaurant was used to test 13 mild and moderate AD patients and 19 age matched normal control subjects' semantic memories. The experiment consisted of free recall, frequency judgement and sequencing tasks. AD patients were impaired in free recall but not in frequency judgement or sequencing tasks, they significantly generated fewer items and committed more temporal errors in recall. This suggested early stage AD patients suffered from loss of access to semantic memory when retrieval demand was effortful. Further contrasts on mild and moderate AD patients revealed that as the disease progressed, AD patients lost vague concepts but retained salient ones, their content and organization of semantic memory were subjected to gradual deterioration.