Conversation systems, strategies and styles used by adult communication assistants.

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(PhD Completed, adjunct research fellow)

This presentation was accepted as an oral paper for the Australian Group on Severe Communication Impairment (AGOSCI) Conference, Melbourne, Australia. May 2017.
Once upon a time in Queensland, Australia…

PhD study – strategies used by communication assistants.

Target disability population was Down syndrome, Rett syndrome and cerebral palsy

Literature – negative voice.

Qualitative 3 phase study:
• demographic data
• observation data
• written narratives

Survey (n=74)

Filmed conversations (n= 6 dyads)

Written narratives (n = 24)

A tool for conversation analysis
What we knew:
The Literature Review

- Asymmetry in discourse
- Discourse - ? communication or conversation
- Between person with CCN & who?

New information

Strategies could be linked to systems of interaction:
- Language
- Human agency
- Relationship
- Culture
- Environment
The Analysis

Survey data: demographic + written narrative: thematic

Observation data: layered CA approach.

The Findings

1. Greater need for: Time, Training, and Technology

2. Interaction analysis tool – CSSA identified 70 conversation strategies.

3. Seven styles of conversation identified
The 3 Ts

Multi dimensional nature of **Time**
‘More’ / ‘additional’ **Training**
**Technology** for conversation.

Strategies

70 strategies were identified and assembled in an alphabetical glossary and coded for a Conversation Systems and Strategies Analysis tool (CSSA).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Id.</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>System(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>01.52</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>@ is [ that it?</td>
<td>Qpolar</td>
<td>OIR1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>01.53</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>(holds palms together in midline) yeb</td>
<td>newsmark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>01.54</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Yeh?  FRIEND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>01.55</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>^^ I wish :</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>01.56</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>you wish for what?</td>
<td>OIR1</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>01.57</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>yeh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>01.59</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>you wish?</td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>02.02</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>(relaxes hands) OK ... a fren</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>02.04</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>you wish for a friend? ((CA process. time?))</td>
<td>Q polar OIR2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>02.05</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Yeh    (claps hands to right side of face, tilts head into hands).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>02.07</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>ob. (looks sad)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>02.08</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>(stares at sister in a pleading gaze, tilts head forward and smiles)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>02.10</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>(mirrors J’s posture).</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 secs</td>
<td>7:6</td>
<td>J = multimodal CA = speech only (Js’ comm. device in another room)).</td>
<td>5q</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Styles of Conversation

1. My words not yours
2. The Ronde
3. The kinaesthetic conversation
4. The ternary conversation
5. You, me and something else
6. The code switcher
7. The coach

Results

1. Conversation strategies can evolve from one or more interaction systems.
2. Interaction strategies form particular styles of conversation.
3. Styles of conversation may be linked to particular disabilities and interaction systems.
4. Asymmetry in AAC discourse may be inevitable, constructive and not necessarily negative.
Implications

Dynamic Systems Theory is a robust approach to better understanding AAC discourse.

Consideration needs to be paid to the level of knowledge, skill and experience that is bought to the research and daily interaction ‘stage’. Are support personnel communication partners, assistants or coaches?

It is a human attribute and right to engage with more than a linear act of communication. We should expect CONVERSATION.
Future directions

• Use CCSA to design training
• Replication studies
• Broader sample groups:
  • Styles of conversation
  • Disability specific styles and strategies

Thank you for the opportunity to share this work.

A few references


