



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

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(PhD Completed, adjunct research fellow)

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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).

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

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 brought 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

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