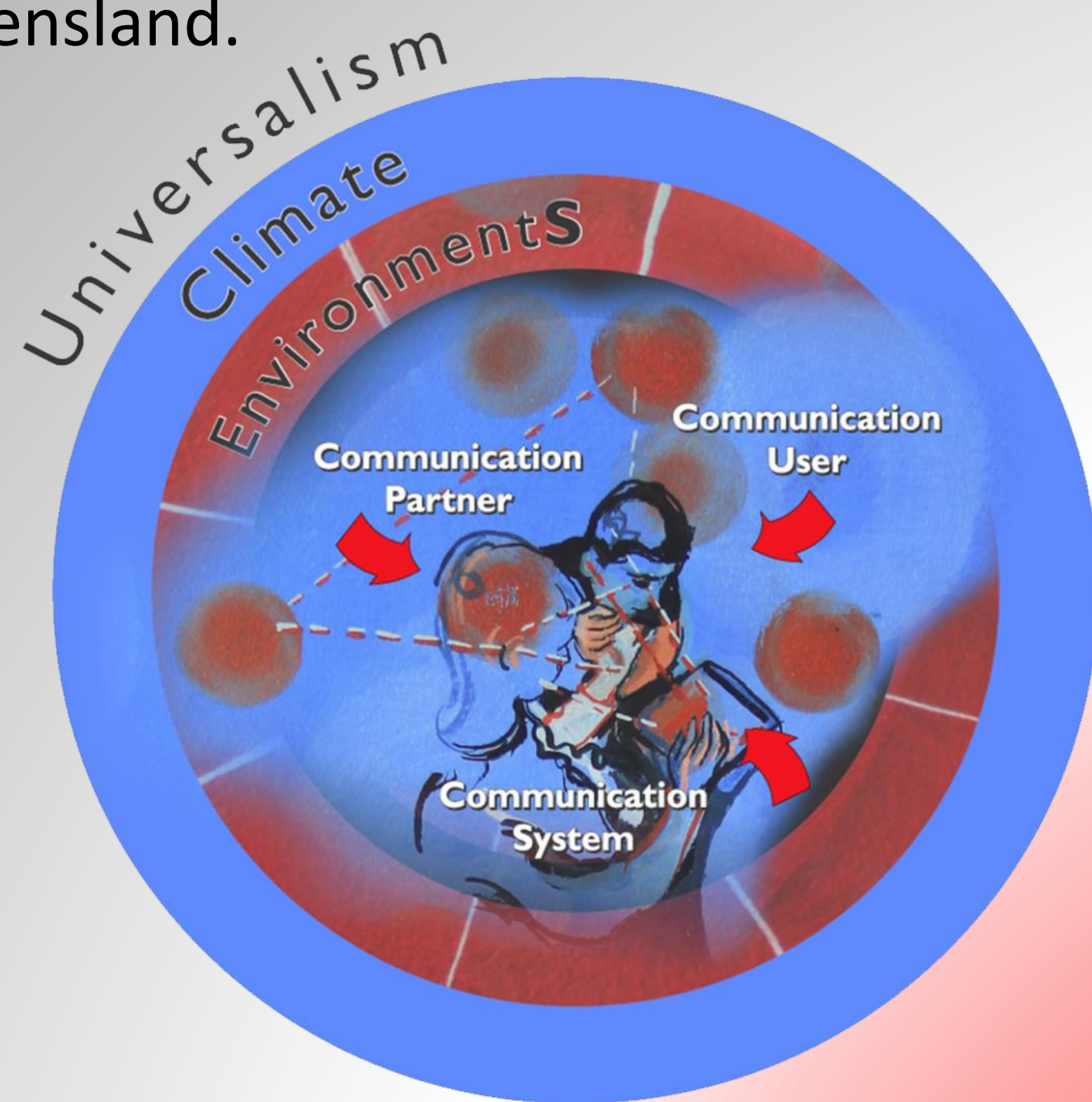


Conversations without speech: Strategies, systems and styles of conversation used by adult communication assistants.

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Aim

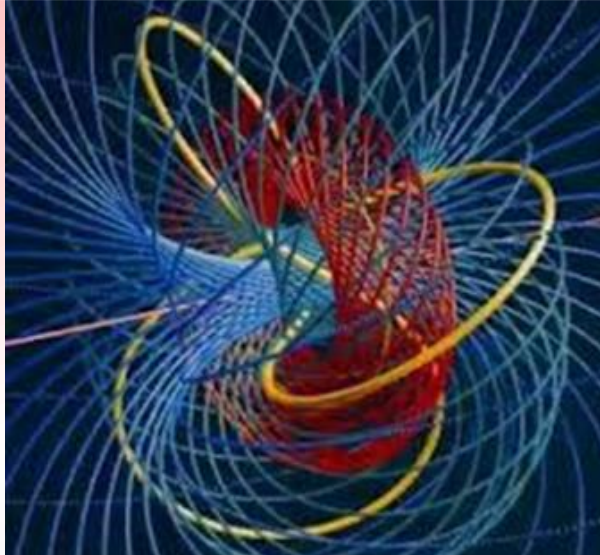
To identify conversation strategies used by adult communication assistants in Queensland.



Method

- A three phase, qualitative study.
 - Phase 1: Survey ($n = 74$)
 - Phase 2: Transcription analysis of 6 dyadic conversations ($n = 12$)
 - Phase 3: Analysis of written narratives 'What makes a conversation easy or tricky?' ($n = 25$)
- Participants:
 - Adults with some knowledge and skill in AAC who support a person with Down syndrome, Rett syndrome or Cerebral Palsy.
- Griffith University Human research Ethics Committee approved.
- One Primary and six secondary research questions.
- Use of dynamic systems theory.
- Use of dance metaphor.
- Transcription notations created and used from the literature.
- Computer assisted citation and data analysis software.

Results

Systems (5 identified in scoping review of literature)	Strategies (73 identified)	Styles (7 identified)
1. Language Spoken and non-spoken meaning making.	33. Pivoting strategies may serve to bring the conversation back to a main topic rather than divert completely. 38. Multimodal communication is an umbrella strategy for using methods and tools other than speech to augment communication.	1. The style ' my words not yours ' lacks a mutual and shared understanding of the language method or tools. Seen and reported in the study often specific to Key Word Signing.
2. Human agency What it means to be human.	02. Accommodation strategies where awareness of human agency needs are demonstrated that aim to optimise the success the other person is trying to achieve. 30. Face strategies to turn body to align with the needs of the other person in the interaction. This action may compromise the needs of their own human agency.	2. The Ronde sees an ABCDA topic pattern reinvites space on the conversational floor to allow the person with CCN to better have their voice heard or to seek expansion or clarification.
3. Relationships Who we connect to.	13. Bridging strategies that serve to create a pause or break in the conversation. 40. Humour used to defuse a tricky situation or reflect the relationship between people. Like swearing, humour may reflect the boundaries that the relationship will tolerate.	3. The Kinaesthetic style, evidenced most in the Rett syndrome cohort and where high sensory needs were met through touch and proximity.
4. Culture Our expression of 'voice' in society.	25. Enabling strategies are those that serve to permit the voice of the person with CCN to be heard. These strategies may include inviting the person with CCN to take the lead in conversation, to make their voice audible in the community and to share AAC knowledge. 42. Pause strategies that are sufficient to enable the other person to take a turn.	4. In the Ternary style the first topic is reintroduced after a period of digression, using an AbA structure e.g. attention switches to meet another interactional system need.
5. Environment The way we engineer our environment.	06. Alignment strategies that enable optimal alignment between people and objects. 34. Framing strategies that reflect an environment optimal for safe practice.	5. ' You, me...and something else ' sees objects included worked with rather than around.
<p>The strategies used by communication assistants, with some knowledge and skill in AAC, showed that they monopolise conversation by asking many questions, and taking the lead in all elements of conversation practice. However, their lead was most often not to dominate or hijack but to enable and encourage symmetry on the conversation dance floor. Dynamic systems theory was a robust meta theory to visualise system interconnectivity and elements that might serve as accelerators or distractors to change over time.</p>		 <p>6. The Code Switcher style reflects polylectality with code switching between spoken and/or augmentative language forms. 7. The style of the Coach is dynamic and multimodal & reflects extensive knowledge and skill in AAC and conversation.</p>

Conclusion

Training may be more efficient when inclusive of language, human agency, relationship, cultural and environmental systems of interaction.

People with complex communication needs deserve access to individuals who are confident and competent in AAC.

Anyone can learn the steps, but not everyone can truly 'dance' in conversation.

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