

Abstract No. 5.6

Wednesday 6th September 2017 at 14:15-15:00

Title: Communicative engagement in multiparty conversations with persons with CDB

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Main focus: Both research and practice/Congenital deafblindness

Abstract: Due to a lack of shareable communicative means, communication with persons with congenital deafblindness is at risk of being limited, while communication is seen as essential for development of cognition and the self. In the current study conversations of persons with congenital deafblindness have been enriched by the introduction of narrative and multiparty conversations. The aim was to enhance communicative engagement, which was operationalised in elements drawn from dialogical theory: positions (speaking, listening, thinking), endurance of tension, communicative projects and negotiations.

The study was performed within the international master “Communication and Congenital Deafblindness” at Groningen University (NL). It was conducted at Bartiméus, a Dutch organisation for persons with visual disabilities. In two exemplary cases, narratives and multiparty conversations were introduced to the conversations of two adult women with congenital deafblindness who received residential care. These conversations were studied on the elements of communicative engagement with an idiographic procedure. The main tools for analysis were: ELAN, focus groups, conversation analysis, dialogical theory and the 6-space model from the Mental Space theory.

In both cases, the duration of the conversations increased by the introduction of narratives and multiparty conversations. Furthermore, both participants endured negotiation processes in order to draw attention to the self and maintained extended and more coherent communicative projects. A following and listening attitude of the communication partner evoked more expressions of self.

The introduction of multiparty conversations proved to be uncomplicated and natural. While conversations were prolonged and gained an higher level of complexity, the communicative engagement of the participants with deafblindness increased, bringing enhanced opportunities to develop cognition and self. Therefore, it is recommended to introduce narratives and multiparty conversations to many more persons with congenital deafblindness.