



Adaptive Interaction: A new approach to communicating with people with very advanced dementia

Dr Maggie Ellis
School of Psychology
University of St Andrews

Urge to communicate

- Humans are social beings
- Born with the urge to communicate (Valenza, et al, 1996)
- People without speech still have an urge to communicate (Nadel, et al, 2000; Caldwell, 1998)
- Including people with advanced dementia (Astell & Ellis, 2006)

Advanced dementia

- Mobility, ADL, speech severely impaired
- Speech loss makes people appear unreachable
- Communication and social interactions limited to basic activities of daily living (Bowie & Mountain, 1993)
- Affects people with dementia and caregivers

Dementia and communication

- Communication difficulties impact on people with dementia, professional and family caregivers (Azuma & Bayles, 1997)
- Strain on relationships (Orange & Purves, 1996)
- Fewer attempts by carers to communicate with people with dementia (Kitwood, 1990)
- Reduces self-esteem and leads to social withdrawal in people with dementia (Kitwood, 1990)
- People with advanced dementia can appear to be completely unreachable
- Is this always the case?

Understanding communication

- Parent regards baby's behaviour 'as-if' it is intentionally communicative (Newson, 1978)
- Baby reciprocates and communication skills are co-created (Vygotsky, 1978)
- Intersubjectivity – awareness of self and other is achieved (Trevarthen, 1993)
- Communication is non-verbal but mutually meaningful (Papousek, 1995)
- Communication skills are developed through imitative parent-infant interactions (Tomasello, 1992)

Intensive Interaction

- Approach to interacting with people with severe communication problems developed for people with profound learning disabilities
- Focuses on non-verbal and subvocal exchanges
- Little or no involvement of speech
- Quality of the interaction is all-important (Nind, 1999)
- Key = behaviour of the nonverbal participant viewed as intentionally communicative

Intensive Interaction

- Hewett (1996) and Nind (1999) focus on 'pre-speech fundamentals' of communication e.g. turn-taking, shared attention, eye gaze
- Caregiver attends to partner's behaviour, creates pauses, joins in with rhythms and sounds made by partner
- May include imitating partner's behaviour and vocalisations

Intensive Interaction

- Caldwell (2008) focuses on 'learning the language' of the person with impaired communication
- Imitation = "a way of capturing attention, a door to enter the inner world of our partners" (Caldwell, 2008)

Intensive Interaction

- View all behaviour as communicative
- Use the communicative repertoire of the person
- Potential application for people with advanced dementia?

Case study

- Learning Edie's language
- Edie is 81 years old, resident in nursing home for five years
- Three stages:
 1. Current communication context
 2. Baseline interaction (10 minutes)
 3. Intensive interaction (10 minutes)

Baseline – Edie



Intensive Interaction – Edie



Conclusions

- Approach based on Intensive Interaction revealed Edie's communication repertoire
- Included vocalisation, movement, facial expressions, eye gaze, turn-taking and initiation (Ellis & Astell, 2008)
- Can this technique be applied to other people with advanced dementia?

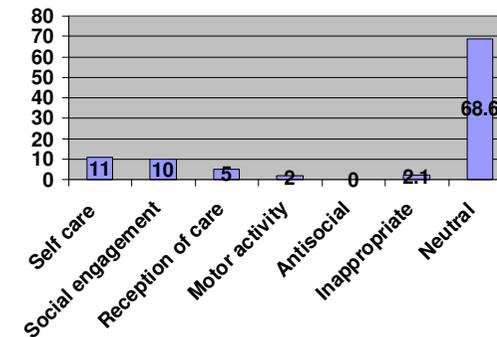
Pilot study - participants

- Five participants with advanced dementia
- All resident in the same nursing home
- Edie (81 yrs)
- Maddie (87 yrs)
- May (88 yrs)
- Bill (80 yrs)
- Gisela (84 yrs)

Pilot study method

- Bowie & Mountain Observational Tool (1993) used to assess individuals' communication repertoires and daily opportunities for interaction
- Each participant took part in a total of 6 sessions (total sessions in study = 30)
- Took place over 2 weeks

Total percentage of activity using Bowie & Mountain, 1993 (N=5)



Coding

- Physical contact
- Eye Gaze
- Gestures
- Facial expression
- Imitation
- Vocalisation

Baseline – Gisela



Intensive Interaction – Gisela



Discussion

- An approach based on II has potential for people with advanced dementia
- Increased engagement: smiling, vocalising, imitation = communication fundamentals
- A way to 'learn the language' of people with advanced dementia
- But memory problems mean working 'in the moment' - have to adapt each time

Next step – helping staff to engage

- What are the barriers to helping care staff to try this technique?

Training

- 1 training session a week for 4 weeks
- Each caregiver was paired with a person with dementia
- Caregivers were asked to assess how the person communicates before and after training

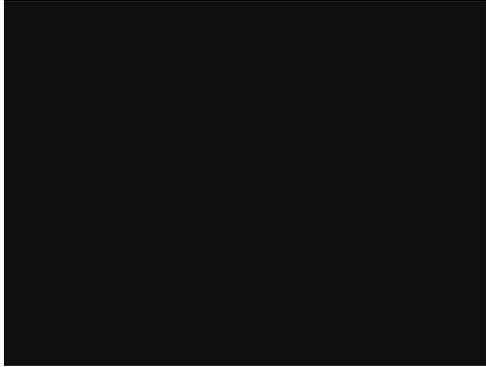
Training

- Caregivers filmed themselves communicating with the person with dementia once a week
- Videos were discussed by the group every week
- Training was built up slowly from week to week

Week 1

- Staff members were asked to communicate with their partner as they normally would
- What is happening in this video?

John & Yvonne – Week 1



Training

- Staff began to identify communicative behaviours
- To look at which movements, sounds, etc. might be meaningful to each individual
- Staff looked at how they could adjust their own behaviour to maximise the potential of the people they work with

Week 3

- Staff had built up new skills based on the fundamentals of communication
- What is happening in this video?

John & Yvonne - Week 3



Outcomes

- People with advanced dementia were encouraged to communicate in a way that was both comfortable and meaningful for them
- This allowed them to express themselves
- Staff felt better equipped to communicate with people with advanced dementia

Outcomes

- Staff were able to identify communicative behaviours – thought that communication was better
- Staff gained a knowledge of the fundamentals of communication
- Staff enjoyed the course and wished it had been longer!

Take home points

- Adaptive Interaction for Dementia (AID):
- Interaction partners need to **adapt** their communication behaviour to
- **Respond** to the needs of people with advanced dementia and
- Recognise that **needs change** as dementia progresses and the
- **Repertoire** of retained skills **varies** between individuals
- Care staff can be trained and engage in AI for people with dementia

Thank you

Please contact me:

mpe2@st-and.ac.uk



University
of
St Andrews