The Effects of Partner Relationships on Communication with Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

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PURPOSE:

- 86% of relationships established pre-TBI, end post-TBI (Kreuter et al., 1998)
- We want partners to be successful so they stick around (remains supports and friends)
- For a conversation to be successful, it is important that the communication partner knows what behaviors are necessary. This creates optimal conversations.
- Many studies focus on the person with the TBI, but do not look into the role of the communication partner and how that can affect the communication (Togher, Power, Tate, MacDonald, & Rietdijk, 2010)
- Communication partners play a large role in successful communication for people with a TBI (Togher, 2000b; Coelho et al., 2002; Hoepner, 2010)
- TBI causes interpersonal deficits that negatively affect social integration (Milton & Wertz, 1989; McDonald, 1993; Milton & Wertz, 1993; Coelho & MacDonald, 1999; Coelho, Youse, & Le, 2002)

PROCEDURE:

1) Participants from local support groups
   - Sacred Heart Hospital - Eau Claire, WI
   - Lakewide Medical Center - Rice Lake, WI

2) Each had 3 different conversations with 3 different communication partners

3) Each conversation was 20 minutes long
   - Open-ended conversations (topic starters were provided in case there was a lull in conversation)
   - Participants selected location (home, coffee shop, clinic setting, hospital, etc.)
   - Conversations were video recorded with the researchers out of the room
   - Middle 10 minutes were analyzed per protocol (Hoepner & Tukeites, 2013)

4) Each conversation was transcribed by the researchers

5) Segments were coded by two blinded raters using the Partner Support Behavior Profile (PSBP)

6) Rates coded conversation turns of the conversation partner as:
   - Maintaining discussion
     - Repeat, vary or emphasize
     - Periodic topic references/checking in
     - Verbal acknowledgments with expansion
   - Topic elaboration/expansion
   - Partner expands on an idea or concept
   - Partner explores a topic by confirming details, requesting information, clarifying, or expressing interest
   - Topic transition
     - Opening and closing topics clearly without abruptness
   - Repair
     - Decide after a breakdown in conversation
     - Reforming an unclear idea
     - Redirecting
     - Requests for clarification

Conclusions were drawn from results

REFERENCES:


PREVIOUS WORK:

1) Some participants with impairments in language or processing strategically borrowed language from partners to conserve processing

2) Closed-ended questions constrain responses. Open-ended questions prompt more information

3) Affect and behavior of individuals with TBI often mirrors the affect and behaviors of their partner (i.e. overflow is matched with overflow, constraint is matched with constraint)

OUR TEAM:

1. Jake
   - TBI acquired in a drunk driving accident
   - Currently is living in a group home

2. George
   - TBI acquired through a ladder accident
   - Previously was a high school teacher and wrestling coach
   - Currently is living in an assisted living facility

3. Mallory
   - TBI acquired through a car accident
   - Previously an English teacher and poet
   - Currently is still creating literary pieces

4. Nine different communication partners
   - Close partner
   - Selected by participant
   - Known prior to injury for at least two years (Douglas, 2007)

5. Professional partner
   - Selected by participant
   - Individual they worked with for at least 6 months on a professional level (i.e. caregiver, therapist, co-worker, boss, etc.)

6. Novell partner
   - Selected by researchers
   - Individual unknown by participant

QUALITATIVE OUTCOMES:

1) Some participants with impairments in language or processing strategically borrowed language from partners to conserve processing

2) Closed-ended questions constrain responses. Open-ended questions prompt more information

3) Affect and behavior of individuals with TBI often mirrors the affect and behaviors of their partner (i.e. overflow is matched with overflow, constraint is matched with constraint)

RESULTS:

BENEFITS:

For individual with a TBI:
- Better conversations with close friends, professionals, family, and novel partners
- Decreased feelings of frustration during conversations
- Increased confidence and conversational skills in a professional setting, whether it be going to the doctor or having a job interview

For communication partner:
- More confidence because of knowledge on successful communication with individuals who have a TBI

ANALYSIS:

OVERALL:

- Partner interactions DO influence conversational behaviors of individuals with TBI, which supports prior evidence (Togher, 2000b; Hoepner, 2010)
- Partner roles matter as well, consistent with prior evidence (Togher, Power, Tate, McDonald, & Rietdijk, 2010)
- Conversation behaviors of individuals with TBI often mirror/parallel partner behaviors in terms of constraint or lack thereof

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- How can we implement change?
  - Inter and educator communication partners
  - Involve communication partners in therapy sessions

REMAINING QUESTIONS:

- What is desirable during conversations? & Using solely maintaining discussion?
- How do you provide support? & How do you maintain that support?
- Which partners displayed effective conversation behaviors? & How did they do this?