

## Abstract

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### FROM WORDS

The aim of this thesis is to describe and evaluate intervention for people with severe aphasia, directed towards affecting their ability to participate in conversation. The entire intervention combines three different approaches and is directed towards spoken production, use of non-spoken production and conversational partner contribution.

The hypothesis for the study is that involving both the person with aphasia and a conversational partner produces clinically relevant changes in conversation. Such changes occur in the patients' spoken and non-spoken production as well as the contributions made by their conversational partners.

A single-subject design with multiple baselines was used to follow individual patterns for four subjects and their conversational partners. All dyads received intervention that was administered in the same order. The first phase targeted individual subjects' spoken production using contextual repetition priming. In the second phase, subjects participated in a group, focusing on the use of non-spoken production to compensate and complement spoken production. Intervention in the third phase focused on mutual conversation involving the conversational partner.

Information from regular video-recorded semi-spontaneous conversations has been analysed and used for evaluation and description of several aspects of the conversations. Regular language assessments and interviews provide additional information. Information from video-recordings, assessments and interviews was collected during the pre-intervention period. Video-recordings continued throughout the entire intervention and assessments were repeated at the end of each phase and at a follow-up. Interviews were repeated at different intervals for the subjects and their conversational partners.

The key findings from the assessments and interviews showed that, comparing the pre-intervention period with the follow-up, all four subjects performed better at picture naming involving trained items. In the interviews, both subjects and their conversational partners described improved abilities related to *initiation and turn taking*. Finally, analyses of the video recorded conversations showed generalization of skills learned during intervention to conversation. Non-speech production increased in all subjects, spoken production for two subjects and all four conversational partners increased their use of strategies.

KEY WORDS: Aphasia, Conversation, Intervention, Word-retrieval, Compensatory and complementary strategies, Conversational partner contribution