

## Conversation partner training PACT Partner interview

### Background

During 2012-2014 the ImPACT project took place in The Netherlands. Aim of this project was to introduce '*Partners of Aphasic clients Conversation Training (PACT)*' in 7 rehabilitation centres and 3 stroke service nursing homes, in order to describe facilitators and barriers for further clinical uptake. ImPACT was part of the Rehabilitation Innovation programme by Revalidatie Nederland and was carried out by Rijndam Rehabilitation Institute, Rotterdam. The *PACT Partner interview* was developed during ImPACT.

During implementation two speech and language therapists (SLTs) per centre served as knowledge brokers. Early on in the project they concluded: '*You must have worked with PACT in order to be able to introduce it to partners*'. In order to facilitate the introduction of PACT with clients (persons with aphasia and their main conversation partner) the *PACT partner interview* was developed in close collaboration with the knowledge brokers.

The interview provides a structure for informing and motivating partners for PACT.

The interview supports SLTs in shifting their focus from their familiar outlook on communication (function and activity levels of ICF in clients with aphasia) to the focus on participation and environmental factors. In PACT the role of the conversation partner within the communicative interaction is equally important as the role of the person with aphasia.

Research has shown that partners benefit from training: they find it easier to talk with their aphasic partner, who in turn is facilitated by a trained partner.

The partners in ImPACT were highly satisfied with PACT. They also showed a (significantly) higher active coping style after training, as well as a (significantly) improved mood score. Their experienced caregiver burden remained the same.

Before engaging with PACT in practice, SLTs are highly recommended to do the one-day PACT instructional course for SLTs.

In using the *PACT Partner interview* the SLT introduces a new perspective on communication for the client with aphasia and their (conversation)partner. The interview has two parts:

1. Inventory of communication and expectations - general
2. Conversations at home - specific

## **Part 1 Inventory of communication - general**

### **Goals**

- The SLT gains an awareness of the partner's insight in aphasia and their new way of communicating at home, in daily conversations.
- The partner thinks about his / her own position and role in conversations.

## **Part 2 Conversations at home - specific**

### **Goals**

- The SLT formulates a perspective on the current communicative interaction within the PACT domains of *repair, turn taking and topic*, as reported by the partner.
- The SLT formulates a perspective on the partner's insight in their current interactions.
- The SLT motivates the partner for PACT (when gains are expected in this area).
- Introduction of PACT (method).

### **Method**

Start with an open attitude, asking about the partners' opinion and situation.

**Ask for specific, concrete examples.** In this way you can check if you are on the same page, as it is difficult to verbalize communication problems and reflect on your own behaviour within the conversation!

There is flexibility in the order of using part 1 or part 2, although starting with part 1 is advised.

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## Part 1 Inventory of communication and expectations

### Instruction

The suggested questions can be used, or use your own words. Follow the order of questions the partner takes you. In questions 3, 5, 6 en 13 you emphasize the role and position of the partner himself/herself. Partners may have not really considered this before, you may need to explain a bit more.

### Ask for concrete and specific examples!

#### Communication (problem)

1. We signal communication problems in (*name PWA*), do you agree?
2. What do you find difficult / easy?
3. What is the most prominent problem, for you?
4. How do you notice this?
5. How do you deal with these problems? And how do you solve them?
6. What according to you, is *your role* in conversations with [*name PWA*]?
7. Why?

#### Expectations

8. Would you like the communication between you to change?
9. What needs changing?
10. How could we make that happen, according to you?
11. What do you expect from speech therapy?
12. With regards to your partner?
13. With regards to yourself?
14. With regards to your communication?
15. In the short term? In the long run?

## Part 2 Conversations at home - specific

### Instruction

In this part you use the PACT domains of *repair*, *turn taking* and *topic*. Start with open questions and become more specific. Try to get as much examples from their daily conversations as possible. Keep the Conversation Analysis angle from PACT in your mind. The questions need not be asked in this particular order, see where the partner brings you and follow on from there.

### Ask for concrete examples!

#### Repair

1. Do you get stuck in your conversations? Why, do you think?
2. What do you do, in that case?
3. What does your partner do, in that case?
4. Do you practice (for example) with the correct production of words within a conversation?

#### Turn taking

5. Who did the talking (before the aphasia) of you two? Has that changed?
6. Do you mind that?
7. Does your partner need a lot of time to react or make something clear or are you having difficult cutting in?
8. Do you ask a lot of questions, in order to make your partner speak?
9. Does your partner ask you questions, informs after you?

#### Topic

10. What do you talk about?
11. Who decides on the topics?
12. How was this before the aphasia?
13. Do you ignore difficult / complex topics?
14. Do you just talk about the here and now? Concrete business? How do you see this for the future
15. Do you mind?

## Introduction of PACT

Partners may –sometimes- dislike the use of video. Motivate your reasons for wanting to use video recordings but do not introduce the video at once. Emphasize the confidential nature of your relationship, the material and the possibility of deleting recordings, when they wish to. The text below serves as a suggestion.

*'We would like to know how your conversations are at home. Our research has shown that SLTs have no clear idea of your conversations at home, yet we try to make them better!*

*Research also shows that people with aphasia communicate better with trained conversation partners. Partners themselves experience conversations to be easier and more pleasant too.*

*The way SLTs talk with [name] is different from yours. SLTs have a therapeutic aim and use techniques to keep a conversation going, and give your partner a 'voice'. As partners you are more familiar with each others situation, family, friends, favourite conversation topics etc.*

*The SLT techniques and your shared knowledge together are ideal in making a conversation with someone with aphasia easier. By using video we can see how you deal with aphasia in your daily conversations and together we can decide if we can help you with PACT'. By looking at some short video recordings, that you and your partner yourself could make, we could get a clearer picture. Think about recording when you sit down for tea and have a chat about a days' work or a day at the activity centre.'*

## References & literature suggestions

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