Conversation topics following severe traumatic brain injury (TBI): A study at 2 years post-injury

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INTRODUCTION
People with severe TBI often experience an impaired ability to hold casual conversations.

Conversational discourse
• dialogue between two people in an interactive exchange

Topic Patterns
• patterns of conversational contributions and discourse abilities

Understanding above will help
Support people with TBI and individuals within their social networks to navigate recovery.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What are the conversational and topic patterns present in conversations between people with severe TBI and familiar communication partners at 2 years post-injury?
2. What is the nature of conversational topics discussed by people with severe TBI and familiar communication partners at 2 years post-injury?

METHODS
Research Design: Qualitative descriptive approach

Our sample (Qualitative, n = 26)
Gender: M 92.3% F 7.7%
Age: 18-59 years Duration of PTA: 6-215 days

Inclusion criteria
16-65 years old
Severe TBI (GCS ≤ 8 and/or PTA >7 days)
Nil significant medical or neurological history
Consent to recording

1. Data Collection
1. Transcription using TBI Bank Transcription Protocol
2. Check via CLAN programme and against audio data
3. Review for discrepancies
4. Recheck entire transcription

2. Transcription
Research question 1: Converstional and topic patterns

3. Analysis
Research question 2: Nature of conversational topics

4. Rigour
• 10 min conversation
Participants’ home/outpatient hospital setting
Audio and/or video recording

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Conversation and Topic Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2 years post-injury</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total topics (T) per conversation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics (T) introduced by PAR (%)</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total subtopics (S) per conversation</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtopics (S) introduced by PAR (%)</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total utterances per conversation</td>
<td>271</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utterances produced by PAR (%)</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
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Notes: PAR = participants with TBI, SD = standard deviation

Nature of Conversational Topics

Taking ownership of day to day life post-injury (96.2%)
- Vocational and/or educational plans (53.8%)
- Parenting and/or social plans (61.5%)
- Personal plans i.e. travel plans, learning of new skills, future planning (61.5%)

Redefining identities after TBI (100%)
- Connecting with others (84.6%)
- Return to work (23.1%)
- Re-integration into role in own household (80.8%)

Residual impairments/concerns at 2 years (30.8%)
- Current physical impairments/impact (11.5%)
- Current cognitive impairments/impact (11.5%)
- Current psychosocial concerns (11.5%)

Continuing changes with rehabilitation (65.4%)
- Positive physical recovery (26.9%)
- Positive cognitive recovery (34.6%)
- Positive communication recovery (16.4%)
- Positive recovery outcomes linked to positive relationships with others (19.2%)
- Attitudes towards recovery (15.4%)

Implications

Development of intervention targets
Reconstruction of identities and roles post injury
Tailor to individual’s discourse styles
Address persistent issues that require interdisciplinary support
Inform clinical guidelines & practice on focus and timing of support
Early time frame for chronic recovery - ? further recovery

Conclusion
1. Patterns: PAR were able to independently introduce and maintain topics in conversations.
2. Nature: PAR were able to engage in appropriate and engaging conversations during chronic recovery.
3. Findings may inform clinical practices in the assessment and treatment of TBI during chronic recovery.