

Interaction Guidance: positively supporting employees in their communication with deafblind people.

“How video analysis improves communication between deafblind people and their environment.”

By Marga Martens, Gabi van de Ven and Harriët Janssen (the Netherlands)

Introduction

In 2002 we became certified in Interaction Guidance for the deafblind. By using video analysis we are able to support professionals in our organisation in their work with the deafblind. We are working for Viataal in Sint-Michielsgestel, in the Netherlands. This is an (inter-) national centre for information, consultations, diagnosis, education, treatment and counselling of the deaf, deaf and mentally challenged, deafblind, and people with serious speech and language difficulties.

Within the deafblind department at Viataal we have three different occupations.

- Gabi van de Ven is educational psychologist at the Rafaël residential centre.
- Harriët Janssen is a counsellor at the Rafaël residential centre.
- Marga Martens is consultant at the Viataal external support office.

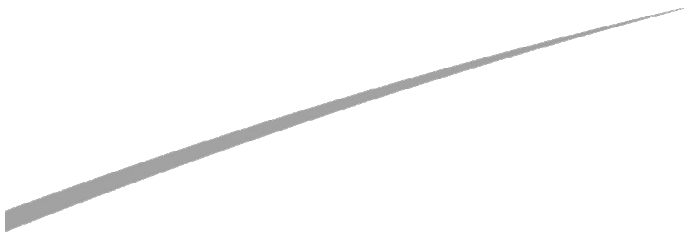
Interaction Guidance through video analysis at the Viataal deafblind department

Video analysis was introduced to our department by Bernadette van den Tillaart. For many years she has been working with us as a teacher and consultant for the Rafaël school. In her work as a consultant she noticed the difficulties the professionals were having in their interaction and communication with the deafblind. This in spite of their two-year elementary course at the beginning of their employment. In order to resolve these difficulties Bernadette studied different methods which could support the professionals even after their training. She eventually came in contact with Video Interaction Guidance.

Video Interaction Guidance, VIG in short, is now used quite frequently to improve basic communication in youth-care in the Netherlands, between professionals and their clients. By means of the basic communications model by Biemans (Dekker and Biemans, 1994) video images are analysed. This model has been added as annex number 1. The VIG starting point can be found in the works of Trevarthen (1979) who researched the interaction between parent and child during the first months and years.

The VIG has two goals:

1. Improving client counselling.
2. Increasing professional knowledge.



Specific for VIG is empowerment. The starting point is the professionals' own power and capabilities. Through these means the professional becomes more aware of the preferred skills and is stimulated to use these skills more often. Thereby experiencing the positive effect on the client. From this point the professionals analyse their learning moments and how to improve them.

The Video Interaction Guide uses certain questioning to trigger the professional whilst watching the short video fragments together. The VIG can be used in both one-on-one situations and in-group situations. The communication between counsellors and their clients can be analysed, but also the communication between the team members can be looked at. Through good coordination between team members and their chiefs the quality of care provision is indirectly positively influenced. VIG can be used in working with different groups.

Bernadette was trained in Video Interaction Guidance. She experienced that this methodical way of analysing the video fragments was very useful in supporting the professionals within our department.

The deafblind counselling improves:

- The deafblind persons' signals are recognised by the professional in an earlier state, which leads to better response.
- There is better attunement to the context prerequisites.

Professional knowledge increases:

- They receive more insight into the behavioural function of the deafblind person.
- They receive more insight into the effect of their own acting.

This leads to the deafblind being able to make their needs known in a more effective way. Resulting in increased self-esteem and reduced behavioural difficulties. The professionals will also feel more competent (Van den Tillaart, Janssen and Visser, 1999).

Within our department we now train Interaction Guides who use video analysis as well as coaching and modelling to support the professionals. In addition to this support they use the Interaction model (Van den Tillaart, 2001a) to work with. This model is added as annex number 2.

The Interaction model is based on a wide scale of experiences in the Netherlands relating to the development and fine-tuning of the communications method for the deafblind population (Van den Tillaart, Janssen and Visser, 1999; Van Dijk, 1986), the theory of sensitive response (Rixsen-Walraven, 1984), the results of the European Working Group on Communication (Daelman, Nafstad, Rodbrøe, Souriau and Visser, 1997 and 1999) and the Video Interaction Guidance (Dekker and Biemans, 1994).

On the next page the Interaction model is illustrated in figure 1.

Interaction Model
Bernadette van den Tillaart
Department for Deafblind
Viataal
2001

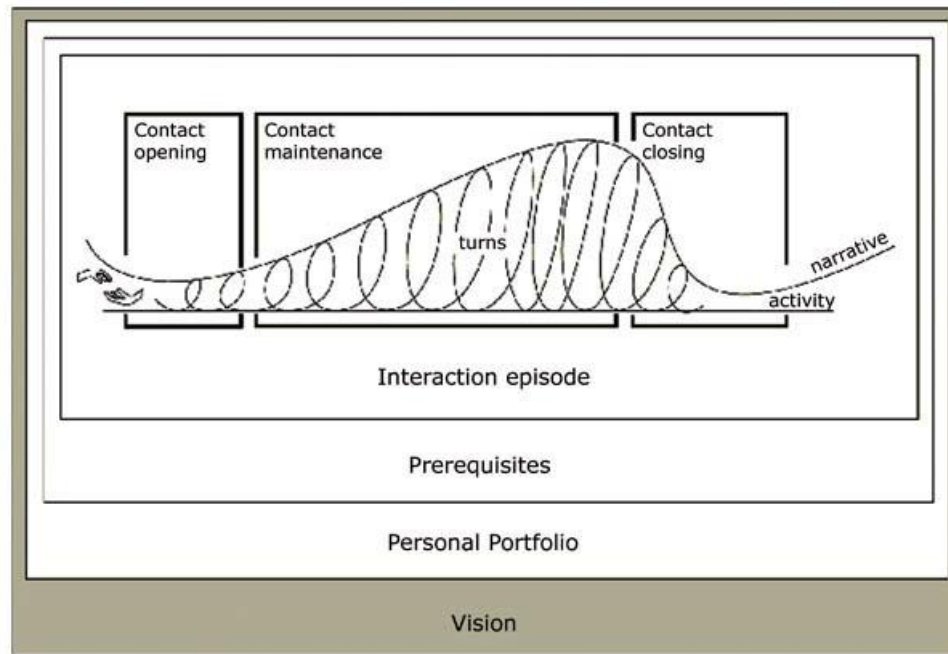


Figure 1: Interaction model

Central in this model is that there is shared vision between the professionals. The following subjects are named:

- The intention to come into contact.
- The departure point is the deafblind persons' own reality and interests.
- Respect for and connection to the deafblind persons initiatives.

A Personal Portfolio comprises information and images about the deafblind person; including the findings and results from the Interaction Guidance. Included in the portfolio is the diagnostic information, the interaction characteristics and the deafblind persons strengths and learning moments.

In addition it must be made clear which prerequisites are required for the interaction between the deafblind person and the interaction partner to be successful. After all, the moment of interaction forms the core of the model. In the moment of interaction the elements contact-opening, contact-maintenance and contact-closing are separately described.



Why use video analysis?

Different researchers have stated that the deafblind and their professionals often have disharmonic interactions. The deafblind differ strongly amongst each other as far as the type and complexity of their possibilities are concerned; thereby also limiting their possibilities to develop. Tuning into the behaviour of the deafblind person is neither an obvious nor a simple skill. The signals the deafblind send out with their behaviour are very complex: both the facial expressions and the body language are of crucial importance. In the contact the professionals are usually very focussed on seeing and hearing: eye to eye contact and verbal expression. But, the way the deafblind contact their surroundings is often more focussed on tactile observation: signals are sent out through means of facial expression, hands and feet movement. If the professional isn't attuned to this tactile observation then the message behind the signal can go unnoticed. In that case, there is no adjusted mutual interaction between the deafblind person and the professional.

When the deafblind person notices that his signals are not being noticed or understood, then he will show larger signals that can result in intensified behaviour such as self-abusive or aggressive behaviour or by retreating into stereotype behaviour or passiveness.

Within a team of professionals there are quite often no uniform agreements on the principles of interaction with the deafblind person. When one professional reacts one way and another professional another way, then the deafblind person on his turn will send out signals saying he doesn't understand the professional. The way of expressing this can also be self-abusive or aggressive. Quite often the professional will stop or react at this point. The deafblind person learns that this behaviour is very effective in regulating the interaction in between others. Unfortunately this deviant behaviour blocks out achieving mutual interaction and learning (Van den Tillaart, Janssen & Visser, 1999; Janssen, 2003).

By using video analysis the complex signals given at the same time by facial expression, hand and feet movement can be enlarged one by one and interpreted.

How to use video analysis?

When problems are signalled within our department with the deafblind persons' behaviour we often observe and analyse that the interaction is very complex and extensive. The educational psychologist chooses to use Interaction Guidance. To support this guidance a supervision plan is used (Van den Tillaart, 2001b). This supervision plan is developed to improve the quality of interaction between the deafblind and the professionals on a daily basis. In the plan elements of the Interaction model are incorporated. An Interaction Guide supports the professionals through supervision. The educational psychologist guards the supervision and remains responsible for the Personal Portfolio; in which the support is integrated. The supervision plan is built up as follows:

Supervision plan

Main target

Improving the quality of interaction between the deafblind and the professionals on a daily basis.

Interaction Guidance departure points

The professional learns by means of the Interaction model how to:

- Recognise individual signals given by the deafblind person.
- Adjust behaviour to that of the deafblind person.
- Adjust the context of interaction.

Guidance Protocol

1. Signalling the request for Interaction Guidance.

The request for Interaction Guidance is signalled by parents and/or involved professionals and through the educational psychologist passed on to the Interaction Guide.

For example: "What is Anthony saying with his self-abusive behaviour?"

2. Question clarification and strategy definition.

The Interaction Guide lists the case questions.

For example: "How can we recognise Anthony's signal behaviour?"

He collects the necessary information concerning the deafblind persons sight, hearing, communication, interaction characteristics, adjusted behaviour etc..

In addition the Interaction Guide researches the context characteristics, both social and physical. Then he chooses the type of guidance necessary after consulting the involved professionals: individual guidance, team guidance, or a combination of both. He also decides on the guidance length, frequency and the evaluation moment.

3. Interaction analysis.

Through the case questions the Interaction Guide studies the interaction characteristics between the deafblind person and the professional. He does this primarily through video analysis. The video analysis of the professionals' interaction with the deafblind person gives the Interaction Guide the following information:

- Individual Signal Repertoire

A deeper study of the Interaction model aspects such as initiatives, confirmation, answering, turn exchanges, attention, intensity and affective involvement.

- Interaction Characteristics

The Interaction Guide notes what the strengths and learning moments are in the interaction between the deafblind person and his interaction partner.

- Interaction Context

The Interaction Guide notes the prerequisites for the social and physical context.

- Targets

The Interaction Guide defines the targets.

For example: "The professionals recognise Anthony's' signals in an early stage." "The professionals adequately respond to Anthony's' interactive and communicative signals."

4. Supporting the interaction partners.

There is target commitment between the professionals. The Interaction Guides starts the supervision by video analysis of the interaction characteristics between the deafblind person and his interaction partner. This leads to uniformity in vision. First of all the Interaction Guide lets the professional discover the individual signal repertoire of the deafblind person, so that the professional learns to recognise the individual signals. The next step is to clarify the professionals' behaviour. The interaction characteristics of the deafblind person and the professional are consciously analysed by means of video material. Thereby giving insight into the behavioural effects of the professional and the deafblind person. The strengths and the learning moments are pointed out. As the supervision continues, these aspects are focussed on. During supervision video analysis plays a central role in both the individual and the team guidance. Other types of support such as modelling, coaching and information transfer are also used.

5. Evaluation.

During the evaluation it becomes clear whether the targets have been reached. This is done based on the original case questions. Also the professionals are given the opportunity to evaluate their supervision. Finally the question has to be answered whether the existing targets need to be readjusted, new targets have to be set or if the Interaction Guidance can be finished.

Daily practice

In the workshop a case is shown in which video analysis effectively supports professionals in their communication with the deafblind. The case illustration focuses on phase 4 from the Guidance Protocol: supporting the interaction partners.

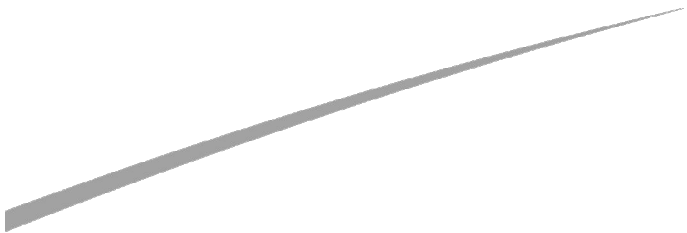
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Addresses presenters

Marga Martens
Consultant for the external support office
Viataal
Theerestraat 42
5271 GD SINT MICHIELSGESTEL
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 73 5588140
Fax: +31 73 5588269
Email: m.martens@viataal.nl

Harriët Janssen
Counsellor at the Rafaël residential centre
Viataal
Theerestraat 42
5271 GD SINT MICHIELSGESTEL
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 73 5588161
Email: jettejanssen@hotmail.com

Gabi van de Ven
Educational psychologist at the Rafaël residential centre
Viataal
Theerestraat 42
5271 GD SINT MICHIELSGESTEL
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 73 5588236
Fax: +31 73 5588239
Email: g.vdven@viataal.nl

CONTACT PRINCIPLES (Dekker & Biemans, 1994)

Clusters	Patterns	Elements
1. Initiative and reception	being attentive	turning towards someone looking at someone friendly intonations friendly facial expressions friendly postures
	attuning oneself	participation nodding naming saying "yes"
2. Interaction	forming a group	involvement in group looking around acknowledging reception
	making turns	giving and taking turns evenly sharing turns
	co-operation	joint transactions helping one another
3. Discussion	forming opinions	giving/accepting/exchanging Investigating opinions
	giving content	mentioning/developing/ in-depth discussion of subjects
	decision-making	proposing/accepting/ amending agreements
	developing effective learners	inviting and supporting review: progress description/ evaluation of predictions/ attribution of achievements/ accessing prior knowledge/ goal setting
4. Conflict management	naming contradiction	investigating intentions
	restoring contact	return to 1-2-3
	making transactions	establishing viewpoints complying with rules

ANNEX 2

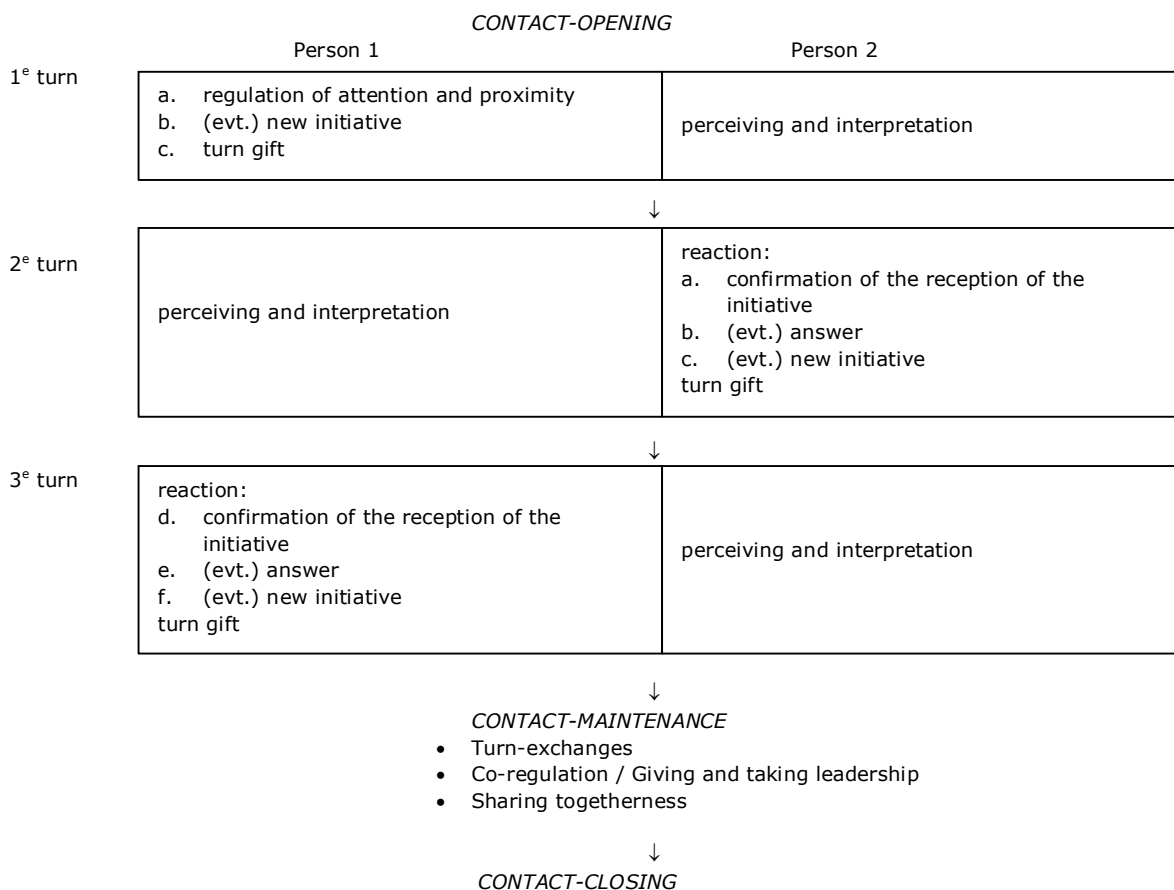
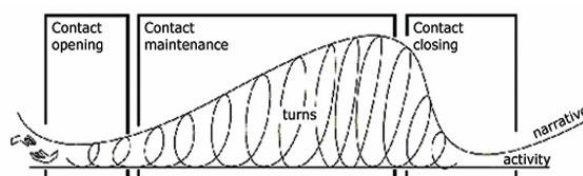
INTERACTION MODEL for the DEAFBLIND

Bernadette van den Tillaart 2001

Vision

- The interaction partner has the intention to come into contact.
- The interaction partner departs from the way the deafblind person experiences his world and from his interests.
- The interaction partner shows respect for and joins with the initiatives of the deafblind person.

The Interaction-episode



Prerequisites

The context is attuned to the possibilities and needs of the deafblind person.

Personal Portfolio

- Individual interaction characteristics
- Strong points
- Learning moments