Table 2

*Multimodal communication strategies used by familiar caregivers*

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| **Theme** | **Sub-theme** | **Codes** | | | Examples of verbatim quotations from participants with participant numbers | |
| \Nonverbal Communication | Kinesics (i.e. body movement) | | Facial expressions | | We used to smile at my dad. (*My dad couldn’t speak but he would try to joke with gestures*)(P6) | |
| Body language | | Body language is important when you communicate with them (P7). | |
| Active listening (silences) | | Using expectant delay | | If you couldn’t understand what she said you would observe her to try and understand what she wanted (P2). | |
| Proxemics (i.e. distance and space) | | Presence of familiar persons | | We would sit around her bed/wheelchair and talk to her (P2). If she didn’t respond we would talk around her (P2, P6).  We used to organise family functions at our home to ensure that they interact with the family (P4, P5, P6).  The whole family would go and visit him at the care facility (P7).  We used to organise outings with the family to a tea garden and take him with us (P3). | |
| Fellow persons in the facility | | He would share a room with someone else and they would not talk to each other (P6).  The other people would lay across from my husband and make a lot of noise (P1).  The place where my mom was had a large room with many beds and so the other people at the care facility would often talk to my mom (P5). | |
| Positioning | | They would often put her in the wheelchair or in an upright position in bed (P6). This made her respond better during interaction (P6).  I would say that she/he responded better when she/he was upright as was more awake (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7).  It didn’t really matter in which position we had him he was minimally conscious (P1). | |
| Vocalics (i.e. prosody) | | Familiar voice | | He recognised my voice. (*He would move his eyes and his eyes would light up* (P1)).  I could see that he recognised my voice. (*You could see in his eyes that he was happy to see me* (P3)). | |
| Singing | | My dad would sing to my mom (*She would smile at him*) (P2).  I would sing to him to get his attention (P1).  My daughter used to sing hymns to him and you could see that he relaxed (P4).  I used to sing to my mom as she used to love singing. (*Later on as the disease progressed it was easy for her as it became automatic and she didn’t have to remember the words)* (P5). | |
| Haptics (i.e. touch) | | Orientation to touch | | I kissed him to regain his attention (P1).… and I pulled his ear to irritate him (P1). | |
| Affectionate touch | | I held his hand to comfort him (P1).  I touched him to let him know I am there (P1, P4).I used to hold his hand and then start to talk to him about my day (P4).  I used to touch him to let him know I wanted to communicate with him (P3).  I also touched him to reassure him (P1). | |
| Massage | | I used to massage him from top to toe (P3).  When I used to visit her, I would put cream on her skin while stretching her (P5).  I used to put cream on her hands and she used to smell her hands afterwards (P5) | |
| Chronemics (i.e. time and communication behaviour) | | Active engagement | | I always engaged with him even though he didn’t respond (P4).  I would hold her/his hand and try to engage with her/him. (*My mom/dad would lay with her/his eyes closed*) (P1, P2, P6).  I really wanted to engage with my son and I used to do my own speech therapy (P3).  You have to talk to him even if you just tell them about your day even though they don’t respond. (*Months after he finally regained his consciousness, he would mention things that I told him while he was in a minimally conscious state*) (P7). | |
| Personhood | | I wanted to treat him as a person as he would do this for me if I was in the situation (P4).  I was patient with her (P2, P5).  I used to let him assist in activities of daily living such as peeling potatoes to help him regain his independence (P6).  It was about my husband and not me and I wanted to do my best for him (P1, P3). | |
| Familiar activities | | My mom really enjoyed eating and my dad really just wanted to please her and therefore gave her some treats (P2).  My dad used to love to eat fruit and we always gave him some fruit (P6).  I really wanted to do things for him that he enjoyed (P3, P4, P5). | |
| Activities of daily living | | I used to help feed her, comb her hair and help her to drink tea (P5).  I used to help my dad by washing his feet, cutting his toenails and putting cream on him (P4, P6). | |
| Communication opportunities | | You need to create time to communicate with the person because there are various other things that take up your time during daily life (P7).  You need to make time to spend with her (P2). | |
| Artefacts (i.e. physical and environmental objects) | | *Physical objects (person specific):* | Communication aid | | I used a book to show photos or a picture of family and friends (P1, P2, P3). | |
| Phone (WhatsApp) | | I showed him videos and photos of where I went and I who I was talking to (P1) and I played voice messages of friends and his brother (P3). We would also do video calls on WhatsApp with familiar people such as relatives and friends (P2). | |
| *Familiar environmental objects that facilitate responsiveness:* | Television | | There was a television in the room to see if we could get a response from my son. (*He used to hate the television and got such a fright because of the light)* (P3).  My husband was in a minimally conscious state and I used to put the television on as he used to love watching sports (e.g. rugby, cricket and Formula 1 racing) and I thought he would enjoy it (P1).  My mom used to put on the television for my dad as it calmed him down. It was also something that he used to do with my mom while he was able to walk (P4).  They would put the TV on to provide environmental stimulation to the patients. (*Nobody would be watching as everyone would just stare at each other*) (P5, P6).  My mom wasn’t interested in watching television she preferred interaction with people (P2). | |
| Music on radio | | Music was provided as a means of providing familiar environmental stimulation based on the preference of the person to facilitate responsiveness:  (*My mom used to love the music of Vera Lynn) (P5).*  *(My dad loved country music and he would become very nostalgic when he heard Don Williams music)* (P4).  *(My dad didn’t really have a great appreciation for music*) (P6). | |
| Entertainment groups | | Once a month there was a group of people who came to do activities with them for example playing music, holding birthday parties or just playing games with them (P5). | | |  |
| Verbal communication | Language content Semantics) | | Discussion topics  *Naturalistic everyday conversations*  *Environment* | | * I used to talk about what happened at home (P1, P3, P6) * I told him/her about his/her friends that came to visit (P1, P3, P4) * We used to talk about someone who is worried about him/her (P1-P7) * The responsibility fell on me to tell him that his mother and my mother and father passed away (P1) * I reassured him/her that I loved him/her and enjoyed being there (P1-P7) * I also used to talk about everyday things (P1-P7) * When talking to my mom I used to also mention the other people at the care facility (e.g. Did you see that lady’s hair and did you notice that lady shouting? (P6)) * I talked to my mom/dad about my children (P4, P5, P6, P7) * Sharing familiar positive memories was very important to me (e.g. Do you still remember this and that….? (P1-P7)) * I explained to him what happened and how he ended up in the hospital (P7) * I used to tell him his name and age, where he is, the time, day of the week and date. (P7) * I would name all his body parts while massaging him (P3). | |
| * I would tell him about the trees, flowers and how the lawn has gone green (P1). * I used to talk to him about things in his environment that were familiar to him (P4). * I would comment on her physical appearance (P5). * I would talk about the terrace and the home where he obtained care (P6). | |
| *Passing on* | | * I know you are tired; we will be ok if you leave (P4). * You don’t need to hold on anymore (P4). * I want you to rest (P4). | |
| Language form (Syntax) | | Using simple subject-object-verb sentences | | I used to use simple sentences to communicate with him for example I saw your brother today (P1-P7).  I used to comment on how she looked e.g. Your hands are so dry today (P5).  I used to inform him on how my week was, e.g. Yesterday, I went to the shop and I saw this person (P1).  The language of communication was either English (n=4) and Afrikaans (n=3) when familiar caregivers spoke to the persons with acquired neurological disorders. Familiar caregivers used sound structure characteristics of these languages. | |
| Language use (pragmatics) | | Anticipating communication | | I used to guess what he wanted to say (P1).  I used to guess what she wanted to say and only got it right half of the time (P2).  She would get so frustrated when I couldn’t guess what she wanted (P6).  Sometimes I couldn’t understand what he wanted and we would go around talking in circles (P4, P5, P7). | |
| Including person in interaction | | I would always include him in conversations and prepare unfamiliar partners on communicating with him (P1).  I used to include him in normal daily activities (e.g. taking him outside to eat lunch with us at home) (P3).  I would invite my parents-in-law over for dinner to include my mom in family life (P2).  We would braai at our home and he would be present during the interaction even though he didn’t contribute we wanted to include him (P6). | |
| Taking communication turns | | I provided opportunities for him to communicate (P3).  I just responded to what my dad was talking about at the time even when it didn’t make sense (P4). | |
| Maintaining conversational topics | | When my mom used to think I was her sister I used to just go with it (P5). Because you can’t reason with her (P5). | |
|  | Communication functions | | Social  Obtain  Information | | * When I came into the room I used to greet him (P7) * I asked him/her yes/no questions (e.g., is your name ……) (P1-P7) * I used to ask her/him about her/his basic needs and wants (e.g., what did you eat today) (P1-P7) * When I spoke to him/her I always provided choices (e.g., would you like to wear the red of blue shirt) (P1-P7) * I always waited for him/her to confirm his/her answer (P1-P7) * I asked him if what he wanted to communicate is more important than the task I am busy with (P7). * I used to explain the procedure to him (e.g. I am going to change you, bath you, comb your hair etc.) (P7) * Asking easy everyday questions(P1-P7) | |

**Note:** Phonology and morphology are not included in this table as caregivers did not mention altering their spoken language in this way.