

BOOK REVIEW

'Feel my Language by Eija K. Lundqvist, Livchristin Klefstad and Trine Seljeseth.
University Hospital of North Norway/Regional Centre for People with Deafblindness.
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Reviewed by Marlene Daelman

Feel my language is a remarkable book. Right from the start the authors set out what a huge challenge the development of communication in people with Congenital Deafblindness is for everyone involved. The book is presented as the result of an intensive period spent working with people with congenital deafblindness and their families and support professionals, all of whom contributed to the creation of meaning through effective dialogues. It notes that the use of video recordings was indispensable, as were the many professional advisors surrounding the project, who helped improve the existing supervision and training courses.

Feel my language was written in parallel to the first author's Master's studies (MSc in Communication and Deafblindness, University of Groningen, the Netherlands). The authors want to advance our understanding of social tactile conversational practices through the work.

The book is presented as a logical next step in the process of acquiring insight into the mutual exchange between theory and practice in communication development in the field of congenital deafblindness. We as readers can learn from these new observations, hypotheses and findings. Persons with congenital deafblindness are introduced from the outset as equal partners in the communication processes Eskil, Thomas and June carry out. The enclosed DVD contains examples of meaning-making processes as they occur in motivating communication situations with each of the authors.

The book has five chapters and is illustrated by a selection of photographs captured from the video footage in the DVD. The scenarios from daily practice are grounded in theory with many references.

The tactile modality is explained as the most complicated of all interactional models for establishing and mastering joint attention, and for expressing a genuinely receptive listening approach (Nafstad, this issue). Many of the concepts and strategies which support the dialogical of interaction and the communication approach are thereby brought to the readers' attention.

Chapter 5 shares some genuinely new knowledge and pleasantly challenges our views on communication development for people with congenital deafblindness with an extraordinary innovation. Involving a person with congenital deafblindness in a three or more-party conversation, giving him the chance to hear other speakers and switch from one interlocutor to another sounds like a pretty 'wild' idea given that to date, people with congenital deafblindness have usually been approached with individual interaction. This is optimal for face-to-face interactions and achieving a common focus, and even then, misunderstandings often occur. However, by tactilely organizing multi-party conversations, people with congenital deafblindness discover that there are other ways to interact than just tête-à-tête. In this way they also get the chance to perceive, by having their hands on the hands of two signing persons, how other people share their thoughts, feelings and experiences and how they create meaning together.

After receiving Eija Lundqvist's thesis (2012), and since the translation of *Feel my language* into English, we in Flanders have also been able to try out multi-party conversations with our young people with congenital deafblindness. On the basis of the changes we observed in their attentiveness, their involvement and their eagerness to participate in tactile communicative interactions, we are convinced that this strategy is offering our young people the chance of their lives! They now intentionally seek out opportunities for multiple I-positions, for example as 'creator of excitement' (Markova, 2006) or 'great reminder'. It really is a way to reveal and awaken their full potential.

So I repeat, this is a great book.

Of course, it contains many 'unknown' concepts for people new to the field of deafblindness. But it is written in an appealing style and the many photographs and video examples help a lot. This presents theory and practice really well together and the descriptions help to focus on the right details. Though the content could be confusing for someone who has not had the chance to try out multi-party conversations, these insights came at exactly the right time for our young people with congenital deafblindness. We are really grateful to the authors. We can only hope that translations into more languages are in the offing.

Marlene Daelman
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References

Lundqvist, E. (2012). *Rethinking interactional practices in the tactile modality. A comparison between two-party and three-party interaction with persons with congenital deafblindness*. Master's thesis. Groningen: University of Groningen.

Markova, I. (2006). On 'the inner alter' in dialogue. *International Journal for Dialogical Science*, 1(1), 125 – 147.

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