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## **HANDOUT-ABLE: Word-finding/Utilizing Circumlocution as a Compensatory Strategy**

For patients who exhibit expressive language difficulties, from any cause, there are options for using strategies to compensate. Circumlocution is one such strategy.

**CIRCUMLOCUTION** = an expressive language compensatory strategy to aid individuals who exhibit word-finding difficulties in conversational contexts.

This technique involves:

1. Identification that a word-finding difficulty event is occurring
2. Verbalizations occur to perform the following for the target/intended word: define, describe, provide examples of what the word is, and provide examples of what the word is not.
3. A continuation of these verbalizations occur until the target word is produced or until the person who is the listener understands the gist of the message. The circumlocution process involves “talking around the word” when a word cannot “be found” during conversations and allows for a continuation of the relay of wants/needs.
4. This allows for communications to remain fluid rather than halting due to word-finding difficulties. This fluidity of language avoids awkwardness, frustration or other uncomfortable emotions for the speaker and/or listener.

History/roots of circumlocution lie in stuttering, where individuals -prior to initiating speech therapy -- who tend to utilize avoidance of producing specific words that they feel they would stutter on – to avoid stuttering.

This is sometimes used as an avoidance communication strategy and is not considered a pattern that is encouraged in people who stutter; however, it has proven to be a good strategy for individuals that have difficulty “thinking of the word” they are trying to communicate. In most cases, speakers relay that they know the word “inside their head” and that “it just isn’t coming out.”

In order to allow for communication to continue, circumlocution allows for the continued relay of the meaning of the word until the speaker is able to “find their words” by eventually being able to produce the target word, or effectively communicate the message via defining, describing, give examples.

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An illustration of this strategy can be described as:

SCENARIO WITHOUT THE STRATEGY OF CIRCUMLOCUTION: A person is having word-finding difficulties may have this type of interaction in trying to think of the target word in conversation: “anniversary.”

- Example without using circumlocution for word-finding assistance: “I was thinking the other day about our ..... oh, what is that word. I know it, it just isn’t coming out. ....” (uncomfortableness ensues, or the conversation breaks down entirely).

SCENARIO WITH THE STRATEGY OF CIRCUMLOCUTION: A person is having word-finding difficulties would benefit from this type of interaction in trying to think of the target word in conversation: “anniversary.”

- Example with using circumlocution for word-finding assistance: “I was thinking the other day about our .... (patient identifies the difficulty of word-finding event) ...

Circumlocution commences: should then commence

1. Define = “It is a special day when couples celebrate another year of marriage ...”
2. Describe =
  - ✓ “they say you can get ‘in trouble’ if you forget this time.....”
  - ✓ “I would really like to go out to dinner this year and invite all of our children to celebrate this special day”
3. Provide examples of what the word is = “Aunt Betty and Uncle Bob’s is February 1<sup>st</sup>.”
4. Provide examples of what the word is not = “it is a special day that is not a birthday, it is not Valentine’s Day”

It is recommended to role-play in learning and practicing how to utilize this strategy before attempting to utilize it in real-word conversational interactions. To do this, make a list of uncommon words that may not be utilized every day. Using another speaker to practice this strategy, the speaker tries to create a simulated difficulty in having an “event of having word-finding difficulties” and performs this strategy. After the speaker feels comfortable using this strategy, the emotional component to having trouble finding words tends to be decreased.

This has been found to be an effective strategy for keeping the conversation moving. Utilize “HOME PROGRAM: Word-finding/Utilizing Circumlocution as a Compensatory Strategy” for example of words to role-play having a word-finding struggle with -- and role-play circumlocution to “talk out the word struggle.” Then, once this strategy is available for use in real-word conversations – patient should utilize it during any moments of word-finding difficulties. Patients do not need to walk through all steps of define, describe, example of what the word is, example of what the word is not --- if the word is acquired at any point in this process.

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