

Clarification Strategies for Individuals with Motor Speech Disorders

Clarification strategies can help individuals who:

- Use speech as their primary mode of communication
- Have difficulty being understood in some or all situations because of unclear speech
- Experience frustration, social withdrawal or limited conversational topics due to repeated experiences of communication breakdown

Clarification strategies can:

- Increase successful communication experiences
- Improve social participation
- Increase an individual's range of conversational topics
- Facilitate continued development of expressive language skills

Research shows:

- There is often an increase in speech with the introduction of augmentative or alternative communication (Zangari, August 2000; Miller, Light & Schlosser, August, 2000).
- Use of clarification strategies results in no decrease in speech and significant increase in communication success and repair (Cumley, June 1999).
- Using clarification strategies results in an increase in communication effectiveness (Hustad & Gutmann, August, 2000).

Intelligibility: Based on the clarity of the acoustic signal – “speech”

Comprehensibility: Enhanced by familiarity to the listener, knowledge of context and use of compensatory strategies, ex. Using different words, adding a gesture, showing a prop

Clarification Strategies and Tools:

1. Maximizing Intelligibility of Speech

- Respiration
- Phonation
- Articulation
- Rate of speech
- Utterance length

2. Increasing Comprehensibility

- Reformulating, rephrasing
- Adding more information and context
- Adding gestures and mime
- Using props in the environment
- Spelling orally
- Writing a word/drawing a picture

3. AAC Strategies that Increase Comprehensibility

- Remnant/conversation displays (books)/story boards
 - Scrapbook of key activities
- Calendar “month at a glance”
 - Include “last month”, “this month”, “next month”
 - Can hand draw, use stickers, Picture Communication Symbols (PCS)
 - Can use classroom calendar
 - Could include in remnant book or conversation book
- Picture Dictionaries
 - Information is all together and organized, often alphabetically or in themes
- Theme displays for specific activities
 - Could develop for holidays, upcoming field trips, favourite games
- Topic setting displays
 - List favourite activities
 - Categories- thing, animal, person, school, feelings, actions, food, something inside, something outside
 - Favourite movies, video games, people’s names
 - Could include in remnant book (or conversation book)
- Letter displays for spelling/initial letter cueing
 - Can help with developing literacy skills
 - Could include in remnant book (or conversation book)
- Electronic devices for spelling/initial letter cueing
 - Need to evaluate functionality of voice output

- Mixed topic/letter displays
 - Can include both on one display
 - Combination of pictures and words/letters
- Communication book
 - Larger organized display; include core vocabulary
 - Can be organized by topic, dictionary style
 - Vocabulary can be categorized by grammatical category
- Communication device (voice output)
 - Functionality of voice output must be evaluated
 - Can be word or picture based

4. Partner Strategies

- Increase individual's awareness of communication breakdown
- Repeat what you think you understood, ex. "I heard you say..."
- Ask the individual to use specific strategies to maximize speech intelligibility, ex. "use all your sounds", "slow down", etc.
- Ask "yes/no" questions from general to more specific, ex. "Are you telling me about school?" "About someone at school?"
- Ask questions with a choice format, ex. "Is it about a friend or teacher?"
- Ask "wh" questions to narrow the topic, ex. What, Where, Who, When
- Ask the individual to use specific strategies to increase comprehensibility, ex. "Can you act it out?", "Show me"
- Direct the individual to specific AAC strategies and model the use of strategies, ex. "Let's see if we can find it in your book."

The role of the partner is crucial!

* adapted from: handout from presentation given by Linda Buskin, SLP, Communication and Writing Aids, Bloorview MacMillan Children's Centre