

Do stutterers use less frequent words?

Pilot Study

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Introduction

Stuttering is a speech disorder where verbal communication is involuntary disrupted by repetitions, prolongations or pauses. In order to speak more fluently, adult stutterers tend to replace words which are difficult to pronounce with more easily pronounceable words in their verbal expression, as a part of their coping strategy [1]. This pilot study looks at potential differences in the active vocabulary of stuttering and fluent adult population.

The objective of the study was to discover if the vocabulary of stutterers differs from non-stutterers in frequency of used words.

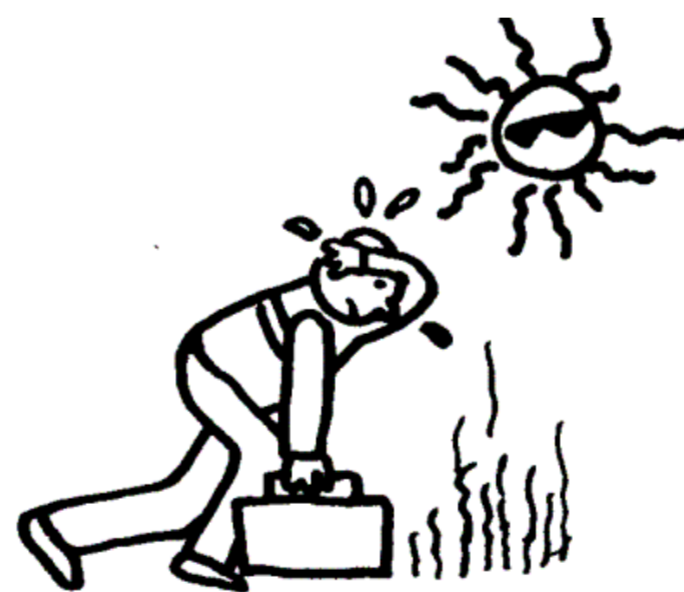
The participants were native speakers of Slovak language with no history of Specific Learning Disorders. They were divided into two groups - stutterers and non-stutterers (n=9 and n=9) ages of 20 and 46 years. Each stutterer was assigned a non-stutterer matching in age and education.

The methods used here were specifically modified to measure the richness of adult vocabulary. Both groups were tested with an online questionnaire, to make conditions more equal[2]. The questionnaire consisted of:

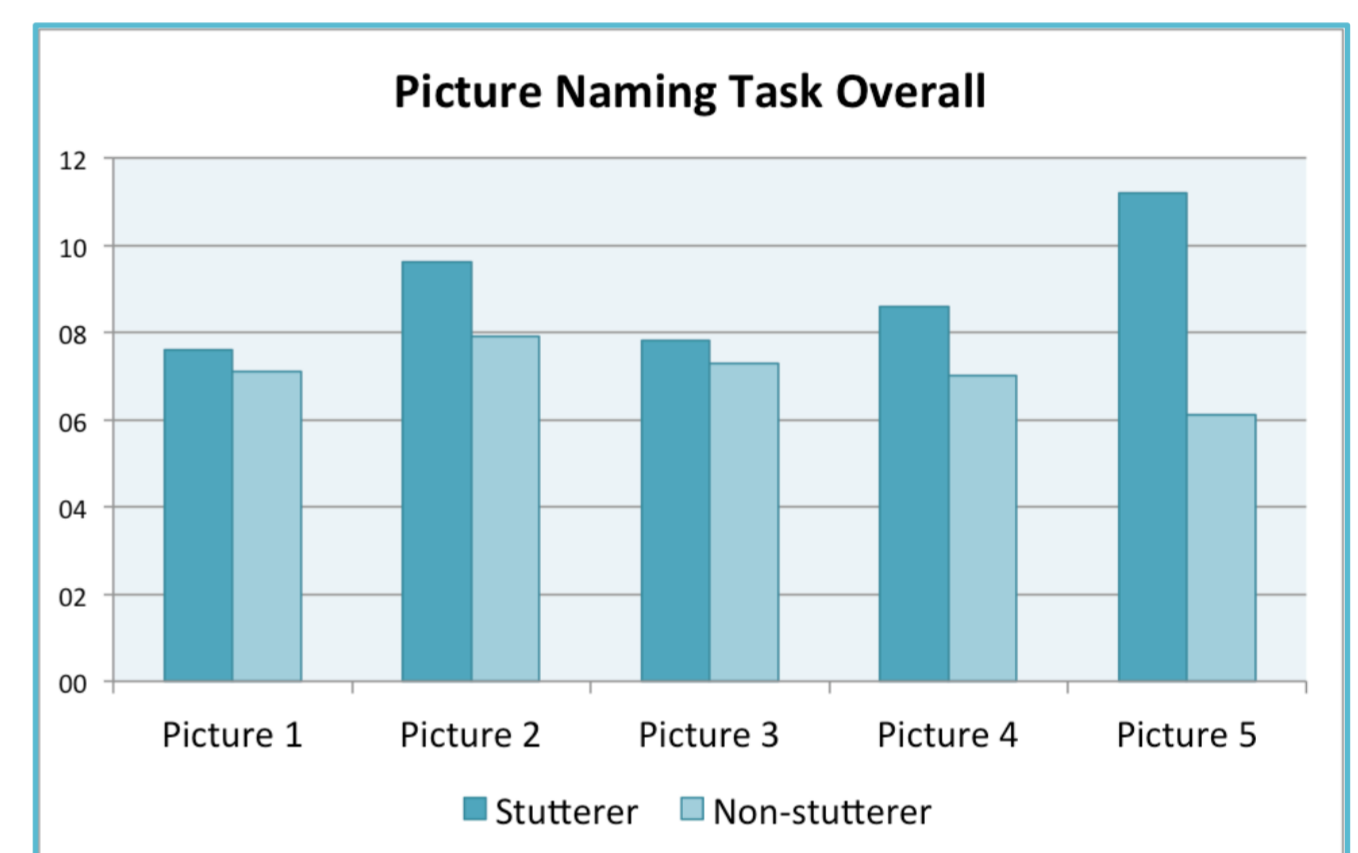
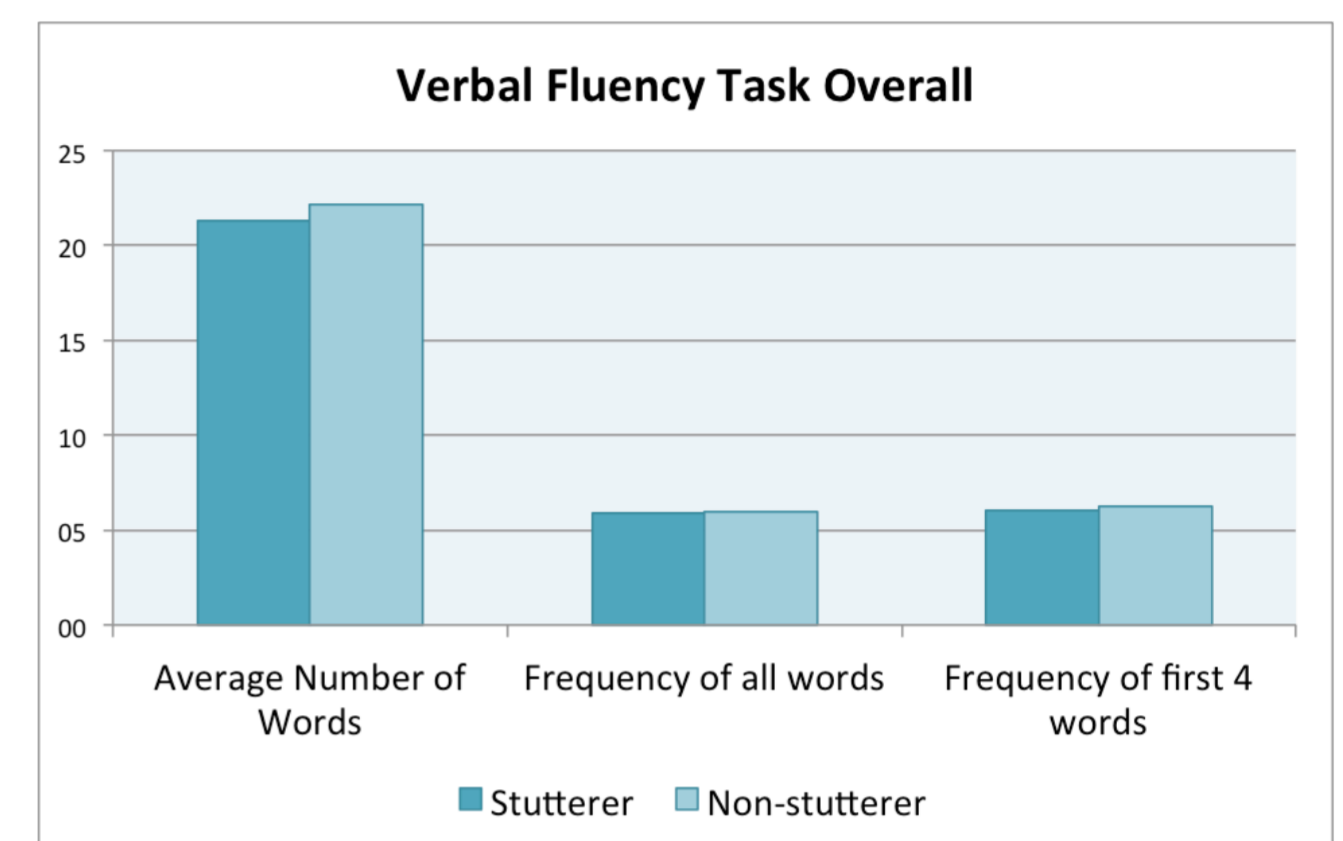
- verbal fluency task
- picture naming task.

In the verbal fluency task they named words starting with a certain letter for a period of 150 seconds. The task was repeated four times with short breaks.

The picture naming task consisted of 5 different black and white pictures with simple meaning, where participants were asked to write as many synonyms as possible to describe it.



Picture-naming task							
Subject	Picture 1	Picture 2	Picture 3	Picture 4	Picture 5	Overall	Median
Stutterer	7,6	9,6	7,8	8,6	11,2	8,9	8,5
Non-stutterer	7,1	7,9	7,3	7,0	6,1	7,1	6,2



The results of verbal fluency task did not support the hypothesis neither in overall score nor in comparison of matching pairs. The picture naming task indicate that there is a certain tendency of stutterers to describe pictures with more synonyms than non-stutterers. However, bigger sample is necessary to confirm the hypothesis.

The possible explanations could be that:

- there is no significant difference in frequency of the words stutterers use and those they avoid.
- the small number of participants had an important impact on individual differences between participants.

In conclusion, our study brought more knowledge into the stuttering of adults and the final confirmation of the hypothesis might be an encouragement in their coping strategy.

[1] V. Lechta, „Balbuties“, in Logopedické repertorium, 1st ed. Bratislava, Slovakia: Slovenske pedagogicke nakladatelstvo, 1988, ch. IX, pp.228-248.

[2] L. Vlachova, „Komunikacni dovednosti osob s diagnostou balbuties“, Bachelor thesis, Faculty of Education, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, 2013.

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