

Abstract

Over the years, the description of stuttering has evolved and a holistic definition of stuttering that accounts for behaviors, feelings, and attitudes has been adopted. These aspects differ across individuals making the disorder highly variable in its manifestation. Bilingualism is also a variable phenomenon in that speakers' levels of proficiency may differ across languages, contexts, interlocutors, and levels of linguistic complexity. Therefore, bilinguals who stutter (BWS) present as a unique case because both bilingualism and stuttering are inherently dynamic and individualized phenomena. As research in the field of speech-language pathology about bilingual stuttering continues to grow, it still remains a topic with diverse and inconclusive results. Findings continue to vary regarding the manifestation of stuttering across languages, a theory put forth by Nwokah (1988). While it can be said that linguistic complexity does in fact have an impact on stuttering in general (Guitar, 2013), the impact it has on BWS varies considering a given speaker's language abilities, proficiency, and the speaker's perceptions about their speaking abilities (Van Borsel, Meirlaen, Achten, Vingerhoets, & Santens, 2009). A growing area of bilingual stuttering research seeks to determine whether or not a causal relationship exists between bilingualism and stuttering. The findings here, too, are largely inconclusive (Van Borsel, Maes, & Foulon, 2001; Tetnowski, Richels, Shenker, Sisskin, & Wolk, 2012). Rather than attempting to prove or disprove a particular aspect of the literature, the current study seeks to gather naturalistic data that can be translated into practical results to be considered and applied in clinical practice. Specifically, this study examines the patterns of stuttering of Spanish-English bilinguals, but also incorporates the BWS's personal and experiential knowledge of their own stuttering. A mixed methods approach is utilized in order to uncover and quantitatively investigate specific stuttering patterns in each language, while

supplementing the findings with descriptive, qualitative data relative to the individuals' stuttering experience. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will provide insight on the potential clinical role of the clients' perspectives and "expertise" with their own stuttering. Additionally, this study is anticipated to yield outcomes that will shed light on current fluency assessment methods as well as subsequent treatment approaches and their implications for the bilingual stuttering population.

Keywords: bilingual stuttering, Spanish-English bilinguals, manifestation of stuttering

References

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