



Language Profiles of Younger and Older School-age Children who Stutter

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Introduction

- Disfluencies of people who stutter are more likely to occur within **long, syntactically complex** utterances (Yaruss, 1999).
- Disfluencies of older children and adults who stutter are likely to be different than those of younger children.
- As children who stutter grow older, they might use coping mechanisms that replace core stuttering like disfluencies (SLD) with linguistic mazes to sound more fluent.

SLD

- Core dysfluencies or stuttering like disfluencies that are typically produced by people who stutter.
- Syllable or part-word repetition: "b-but," "thi-thi-this"
- Prolongations: "mmmy," "cooookie"
- Blocks: "#toy"
- Broken words: "o#pen"

Mazes

- Indirect measure of language planning and monitoring (Fletcher, 1990).
- Filler-pause: "um"
- Revision/abandoned utterances: "Mom ate/ Mom fixed dinner," "I want/Hey look at that"
- Multisyllable/phrase repetition: "because because," "I want I want to go"

The aims of the present study were to:

- Determine whether there are differences in the disfluencies (SLDs and mazes) produced by younger and older school-age children who stutter (CWS) and
- Examine the relationship between linguistic mazes and language complexity in school-age CWS.

Participants CWS (N = 14)

Younger: 7- to 11-year olds (n = 6)

Older: 12- to 16-year-olds (n = 8)

Method

- All participants had a diagnosis of mild to moderate stuttering.
- Examiners obtained conversational language samples from each participant using a semi-structured interview.
- Participants produced an average of 55.36 utterances in their samples.
- A trained research assistant transcribed the samples using Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT; Miller & Chapman, 1993) conventions.
- Abandoned, incomplete, or unintelligible utterances were excluded from analyses.
- Variables were computed based on the transcribed samples using SALT software.

Key Variables

Average Number of SLDs per Utterance

Average Number of Mazes per Utterance

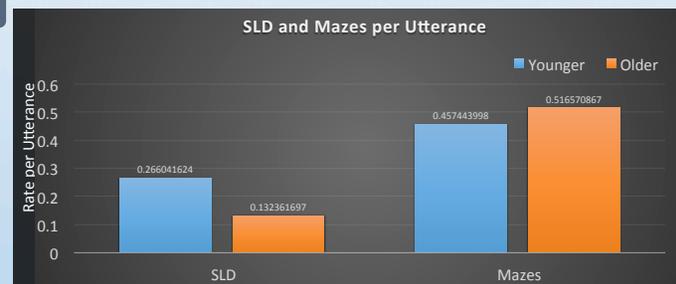
Mean Length of Utterance in Morphemes (MLU-M)

Average % of Mazes in Utterances with 1-6 Words

Average % of Mazes in Utterances with 7-13 Words

Results

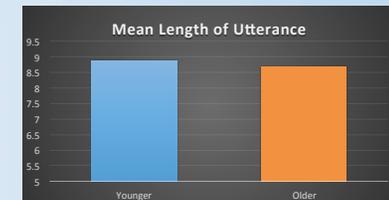
No significant differences in SLDs or Mazes per Utterance across age groups ($p > 0.05$).



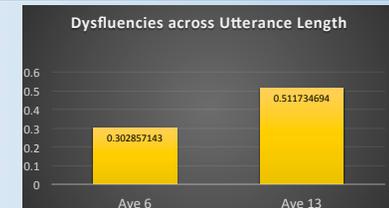
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Results

No significant difference in MLU-M, across the groups ($p > 0.05$)



The Average Percentage of Mazes in Utterances with 1-6 Words lesser than the Average Percentage of Mazes in Utterances with 7-13 Words (p -value = 0.002).



Discussion and Conclusion

- Sentence length was a substantial predictor of disfluencies (Yaruss, 1999).
- Longer sentence \rightarrow greater processing demand \rightarrow breakdown in the fluency.
- We will continue to examine the impact of stuttering severity, language skills, and linguistic complexity to better understand the language and disfluency profiles of these school-age children.

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