

Perceptual Analysis of Speech in Persons with Stuttering: A Pre-Post Therapy Comparison

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated perceptual characteristics of speech in persons with stuttering before and after speech therapy. Five adult stutterers served as subjects. All the stutterers underwent prolongation therapy. Percentage of dysfluency, rate of reading, and type of dysfluencies were calculated in reading and spontaneous speech, before and after therapy. Results indicated significant reduction in the percentage of dysfluency, and increase in the rate of reading after therapy. In the post-therapy speech samples, only word repetitions, part word repetitions, and audible pauses were observed. The results indicated that prolongation therapy was efficient in treating adults with stuttering.

INTRODUCTION

Stuttering is a fluency disorder with breakdown in forward flow of speech. The characteristics of stuttering include hesitations, stoppages, repetitions and prolongations of speech. Fluency is interrupted by contractions, tremors or abnormalities of phonation and respiration. Stuttering is a widespread problem and it is very debilitating and rarely undergoes spontaneous recovery. The long term effects of stuttering on adults have been demonstrated to be undesirable. It can be disabling emotionally, socially and vocationally (Craig & Calver 1991).

Over the years several therapeutic methods based on different theoretical assumptions have been used to treat stuttering in adults (St. Louis & Westbrook 1987). Of these, the most widely used technique incorporates *prolonged speech* (Ingham 1984). Over the last few decades numerous variants of the prolonged speech technique have proliferated and today the term is used generally to refer to a group of vaguely specified speech pattern known variously as *smooth speech* or *precision fluency shaping* (Curlee 1993 among others). Initially clients use a slow rate of