

Disfluencies in Children (3-4 Years)

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To differentiate normally nonfluent children from stuttering children, a knowledge of development of fluency is essential. In this study an attempt has been made to evaluate the disfluencies of 12 Kannada speaking normal children between three to four years (two each in two month interval belonging to middle socio-economic class). A minimum of half an hour speech sample was elicited from all children using different tasks (picture description, conversation, rhymes and story telling).

Recorded speech samples were transcribed and analysed for different disfluencies. They are

- i. unfilled pauses - a period of silence
- ii. filled pauses - urn, uh, ee, er
- iii. Repeats - syllable, word, part word and phrase repeats
- iv. False starters, Grammatical modification of the phrase correction of phrases of words and incomplete utterances
- v. Parenthetic remarks (matte) (a:va:ga) (a:me:le) and other fillers. Samples were also analysed for audible inspiration/expiration part question repetition and prolongations. Percent of position of occurrence of disfluency and the grammatical categories before which disfluencies occurred were also analysed. Disfluency like 'da da dara was considered to occur in the initial position of an utterance. 'Karkonkon konbande' was considered as a disfluency in the medial position of the utterance and 'be reee' was considered as a disfluency in the final part of the utterance.

Results indicated that all these subjects had more percent of unfilled pauses, followed by filled pauses, parenthetical remarks, repetitions and false starters. The disfluencies occurred more in picture description task except parenthetical remark which was observed more in story telling than other tasks. All the types of disfluencies, except parenthetical remark, which occurred more in initial position. However, more parenthetical remarks were noticed in the medial position. Disfluencies occurred more before content words, especially nouns.

In general, repeats peaked at 3-3.2 years, filled pauses at 3.2 to 3.4 years, unfilled pauses in 3.4 to 3.6 years false starts in 3.6 to 3.8 years and parenthetical remarks in 3.10 to 3.12 years. False starts though found were negligible.

Based on these results, a test for fluency was proposed and picture description was recommended as a task. The percent disfluency and ranges in each age group is provided with as a cut of score for the differentiation of children as normally non-fluent/stuttering. However, this is only a proposed test and it has to be administered with children to validate and thus to utilize in diagnosis and therapy.