CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF STUTTERING

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Of all the words in the English language which deceive the listener, by virtue of the assumption that we all 'know' what they mean, two which are particularly confusing are 'stuttering' and 'deafness'.

In the case of the former term, the structure of the word itself lends to this confusion; the very repetitive nature of the term might be assumed to describe the behaviour to which it refers. Support for this notion might be found in the many clinical observations in which nearly every deviation in speech—along with many normal speech characteristics—have been termed 'stuttering'. One finds out very early in his research career that such confusions are many times multiplied when we attempt to use a term such as 'stuttering' in cross-cultural research.

While a number of reports in the literature report the apparent universality of stuttering as a problem in human communication, a critical examination of the writer's qualifications for making such a determination leave many of the observations open to serious doubt. Under these circumstances, the report of the physical anthropologist Hrdlicka (1908) that he found no defects in speech among American Indians he was conducting research among in the southwestern United States must be viewed with the same critical eye as the report by the cultural anthropologists Leighton and Kluckhohn (1947) that Navajo parents feel if they break a pot their child will stutter or have other speech difficulties. The fact that the Navajo are one of the American Indian groups living in the area visited by Hrdlicka only serves to add to the confusion.

The obvious omission in both the Hrdlicka and Leighton and Kluckhohn reports, which is shared in most of the cross-cultural reports on the problem of stuttering is a definition of the term or, even better, a description of the behaviour to which the term refers. It may be presumed that a report of the presence of stuttering refers to a relative lack of speech fluency; clinically, however, the term encompasses much more. Johnson's (1959) definition is much more descriptive of the *phenomenon* of stuttering as opposed to fluency of speech alone. According to this definition, the problem of stuttering begins with a listener, sensitive (for whatever reasons) to the disfluency of a speaker; the listener's evaluation that this disfluent speech as 'stuttering' then leads to sensitizing the speaker to view his

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speech as a problem and results in the stress and strain typically seen when speech perfection is equated with speech normalcy. The problem, according to this definition, then involves at least two persons-a speaker and a listener. A dis

fluent speaker who is not aware of or concerned over his disfluency can scarcely be termed a 'stutterer'. Surprisingly enough, it has only been within the last decade that cross-cultural research into the problem of stuttering has been undertaken which first defined, cross-culturally, the problem under investigation— by means of tape recorded samples of stuttered speech of various degrees of severity which were played to informants who were then asked if anyone in their community had similar difficulties in producing speech.

The most recent publication on stuttering among American Indian groups, by Johnson and Stewart (1970, in press), reviews the existing literature. Briefly stated, the factors related to the presence or absence of the problem of stuttering in North American Indian societies are these:

1. Stuttering does not occur in groups which do not have a term for it in their language.
2. Stuttering does not occur in isolation; i.e., the presence of stuttering is related to other 'stress' phenomena in the child's environment— concern over toilet training, physical development, language acquisition, etc.
3. Stuttering does not occur in nomadic groups; it appears to be dependent upon a relatively stable social structure which, in turn, seems to lead to concepts such as property acquisition and inter-group competition.
4. Stuttering does not appear to develop in groups which recognize the developmental nature of child growth and language development and reflects this recognition in both the 'adult' language and the 'baby' language.

The first and fourth of the above factors are clearly linguistically related and shall be the primary focus of the present report.

Johnson (1944) appears to have been the first person to write down his observation that the absence of a term for 'stuttering' was accompanied by an absence of the problem. Further research by Stewart (1960) lent verification to this observation, and the further conjecture that the structure of the 'baby language' in a given society might also be related to the presence or absence of stuttering, with particular reference to the acceptability of reduplication as part of the 'baby language'.

A comparative look at terms used to denote 'stuttering' in various languages reveals an interesting finding—that the term itself, as the English term 'stuttering', appears to describe linguistically the behaviour it describes. If we can accept the cross-cultural validity of the terms, and previous statements above point out the risk involved in such acceptance, the following terms (collected by Johnson

in personal correspondence, 1954) from Africa nearly all show the repetitive characteristic of their referent:

Southern Sotho	lehoelea (stutterer)
	hohoelea (to stutter)
	hohoeleketsa (to articulate badly)
Sotho	kgamakgametsa (to stammer)
Swazi	ngangata (to stutter)
Xhosa	thintitha (to stutter)
Zulu	ngingiza (to stammer)
	unamalimi ('he has tongues', i.e., he stammers)
Tswana	kwakwetsa (to stammer)
Herero	kokoma (to stammer)
Nyanja	dodomadodoma (to stammer)
Lamba	wulwusya (to stammer)

Landar (1961), citing a number of sources, presents a very extensive list of terms presumed to refer to 'stuttering'. Of particular interest are those which are reduplicative

Tahitian	vivovivo ('to stutter, stammer, speak carelessly')	
	'arerarera ('to stammer, lisp')	
Samoan	faatoa gagana ('to stammer')	
	faananinani ('to stutter, to speak as a child')	
Tongan	ku va na mangangamila ('to stutter, stammer, falter')	
Fijian	kaka ('to stammer, stutter')	
	tata ('to stammer, stutter, speak indistinctly')	
Tagabili	sagasud ('to stutter')	
Japanese	domoru ('to stammer, stutter, falter')	
Turkish	pepelemek ('to stammer')	
	kekelemek ('to stammer, stutter')	
Malagasy	mibadabada	('to stutter')
	miambatrambatra	,,
	miakaka	,,
	miakanakana	,,
	miambakambaka	,,
	miana-miteny	,,
Bambara	sousouli	,,
Hausa	i'ina	('stuttering, stammering')
	ana-ana ('very bad stammering')	
Bobangi	kukumisa ('to stutter, stammer')	
Zulu	ubungingingi ('stuttering, stammering, hesitant speech')	
Egyptianf	natat ('to stammer')	
	ketket ('to stammer, to stutter')	

What relationship, then, might be deduced from the structure of the foregoing terms for 'stuttering' and the structure of a given society's 'baby language'? A partial answer might be found in rereading the terms reported by Landar—

• Compare with Zulu from Johnson list.
+ From ancientEgyptian hieroglypics; this may be first recorded use of terms to denote 'stuttering'.

only one, that from Samoa, refers to speech of the child **and** equates, or at **least** is equated by the person reporting the term, stuttering and childhood speech. Reduplication, of course, is highly characteristic in children's speech; in many languages reduplication is used to express diminution and affection, both of which are also obviously related to children and feelings about children. While no exhaustive lists of such 'baby languages' are available, those from which some portions have been published are rich in their use of reduplication. Kroeber (1916), for example, in his observations of the speech of a two-year-old Zuni (American Indian) child, found 12 of the first 18 different words used by the child in the first week of observation to be reduplicative; further, in common with other investigators, the child's term did not necessarily show any relationship to the adult term for the referent :

Zuni Child Term	*Zuni Word*	*English Word*
ma'ma	tsitta	mother
ta'ta	tattcu	father
na'na	nanna	grandfather
wa'wa	wowwo	grandmother (paternal)
pa'pa	pappa	older brother
mle'mle	mellik	American
titi	ci'we	meat
tu'tu	tuttu	water
a'ta	attciannc	knife
we'we	wa'tsita	dog
o'ho'ho (horse or donkey)	(none given)	from English word 'whoa'

The similarity and structure of the Zuni child language to that of another American Indian group living near the Zuni, the Hopi, can be seen from the words recorded by Dennis (1940): tata for 'father', yaya for 'mother', mama for 'eat', yoyo for 'nurse', vava for 'brother', and gaga for 'sister'.

To prevent the unwarranted conclusion that a reduplicative baby language is an American Indian characteristic only, Funaki (1964, personal correspondence) provides the following comparisons from the Japanese language:

Standard *Japanese*	*Japanese Baby Word*	*English*
me	omeme	eye
hana	ohana	nose
kuchi	okuchi	mouth
mimi	mimi	ear
hoho	hoppe	cheek
atama	otsumu	head
te	otete	hand
ashi	anyo	legs **and** feet
hara	pompom	stomach
kami	kankan	hair
yubi	yubi	finger

Standard	Japanese	Japanese Baby Word	English
tsume		otsume	fingernail
gyunyu		oppai	milk
mizu		omizu	water
yu		obu	hot water
ohuro		obu	bath
gohan		umauma	meal

A second characteristic seen, in addition to reduplication (which is noted in both the adult and baby forms above) is the addition of the prefix *'o'* to the standard Japanese term when the standard Japanese term is already a reduplication.

The definitive study of the relationships between reduplication and the problem of stuttering, as well as reduplication and normal disfluency, has yet to be undertaken. From the evidence at hand, it would appear that stuttering may well be related to the recognition of the repetitive nature of a child's speech, the acceptability of this repetitiveness, in the context of the total culture of a people and its language. The findings of the present author (Stewart, 1960) in this regard need to be put to experimental test by other investigators in other areas of the world.

A dozen years ago, Stewart (1960) compared numerous cultural and linguistic factors of two American Indian groups, one in which stuttering was reported to exist (the Cowichans of Vancouver Island, Canada) and one in which stuttering was reported not to exist (the Ute of Utah). In addition to verifying the presence and absence of stuttering in the two groups, the research also revealed the following differences of concern to us in this report:

1. The incidence of stuttering among the Cowichans appears to have declined with the deterioration of the aboriginal culture which was characterized by a highly competitive social structure in which fluent speech played a large role;

2. The difficulty in speaking by those Indians considered to be stutterers is not as severe as that of non-Indian stutterers in the United States as a whole;

3. Traditional methods of child training by the Cowichans reflected the relatively limited extent to which growth is viewed as a dynamic process. The Ute language's recognition of the various stages of the child's development and maturation might be related to their more 'permissive' attitudes toward the child;

4. The influence of a term equivalent to 'stuttering' seems to determine, in large part, the development of the problem as evidenced by Cowichan reports that some mothers were more influenced by the 'label' than they were over their own more objective observations of their child's speech;

5. Some forms of disfluency appear to be considered deviant in some societies and not in others ; therefore, it may be that the form of unacceptable hesitations may vary among societies.

Considering the varied linguistic geography of India, further research in this country into the lines of inquiry sketched in the present paper would seem to be both highly desirable and necessary for our further elucidation of the problem called 'stuttering'.

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