Adoption of the mitigation strategies against Anxiety related Stuttering during Presentation: An Empirical Survey of English language and Literature in English Students in Akwa Ibom State Tertiary Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the Adoption of the mitigation strategies against Anxiety related Stuttering during Presentation: An Empirical Survey of English and Literature Students in Akwa Ibom State Tertiary Institutions. Comparative survey was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions in the state (University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Akwa Ibom State College of Education Afaha Nsit, and Akwa Ibom State College of Science and Technology). The population of the study comprised undergraduate students from the five institutions. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 20 undergraduate students from each of the 5 institutions, giving a total of 100 respondents for the study. The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Adoption of Mitigation Strategies against Anxiety related Stuttering during Presentation of English and Literature Students in Tertiary Institution Questionnaire (AMSASPELSTIQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.74 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as simple regression and t-test analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study reveals that there is significant difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature. Therefore, the study concluded that anxiety experienced in oral presentation can be debilitating and can influence students' adaptation to the target environment and ultimately the achievement of their educational goals. One of the recommendation was that

KEYWORDS: **Oral presentation, Anxiety and Shuttering, English, Literature, Students, Mitigation, Tertiary Institutions**

Introduction

Today, oral presentation skills play an important role in the world of work (Maulana and Lestari, 2017). Oral presentation is a medium to synergize ideas or ideas that are developed and developed in accordance with the needs of the opposite of communication. Tkachenko (2014) explains presentation skills as the set of techniques and skills required to successfully present oral information to others which cover a variety of areas such as the structure of the presentation, the design of the slides, the tone of the voice, the body language, etc. Anxiety experienced in oral presentation can be debilitating and can influence students' adaptation to the target environment and ultimately the achievement of their educational goals (Woodrow, 2006). According to Gillam, Marquardt and Martin (2000), anxiety can also be exhilarating. Putting ourselves into situations that make us anxious and feel ordeal at the same time, but getting through to the other side can bring an incredible sense of achievement. Stuttering is characterized by a disruption in the flow of normal speech production. The Primary behaviors of stuttering include repetitions of syllables or words, prolongations of sounds, and blocks, which disallow the occurrence of a sound for an unusually long period of time. It has been evident that stuttering varies around the worldwide which include both pre-school children and other school students. According to Kenkel (2011), effective presentation and public speaking skills are central to success in business, sales, training, teaching, and lecturing.

Statement of Problem

Over the years, it has been watched with keen interest, the cases of poor oral presentation by secondary school students and those of tertiary institution not only in Akwa Ibom Sate but also globally. Student studying English language and literature in English are not exempted from this observation. Some students stutter during presentation as a result of anxiety while others adopt mitigation strategies to overcome stuttering during speech or oral presentation, Sequel to the aforementioned facts, this study is conducted to find out the extent of the adoption of these mitigation strategies to do good oral presentation or speeches between the students studying English language and those studying literature in English in tertiary institution in Akwa Ibom State.

Objective of the Study

1. To find out the extent of adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation among students in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions.

2. To find out the difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature.

Research Questions

1. To find out the extent of adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation among students in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions.

2.   To find out the difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature.

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature.

Conceptual Review

Concept of oral presentation

Oral presentation is a specific form of communication i.e. the art of speaking in a structured manner on a particular topic in front of a group for a specific purpose at a specific time and place. The ability to do such a presentation is not a natural one but rather a skill that must be learned and developed (Storz, 2013). Bereczky, (2015) define a presentation as a preplanned, prepared, and structured talk given in formal or informal circumstances to a small or large group of people. In a slightly different statement, Tkachenko (2014) describes a presentation as a speech or talk in which a new product, idea, or piece of work is shown and explained to an audience. Presentation is usually given to more particular audiences (Mandel, 2000). Oral presentation, according to Al-Nouh, Abdul-Kareem and Taqil, (2015) is planned and practiced speech that is not memorized or read from notes but is introduced by a presenter to an audience. Oral presentations are a form of assessment that calls on students to use the spoken word to express their knowledge and understanding of a topic. It allows capture of not only the research that the students have done but also a range of cognitive and transferable skills (Joughin, 2010).

Leech (1993) asserts presentation is not entirely speech. It differs from a formal speech in three main respects. (1) It might be given impromptu, prepared only in outline form and spoken from visual aids and notes rather than fully written and delivered word for word, as speeches may be. (2) It often involves visual aids, while many formal speeches do not. (3) A presentation is usually given to an audience which is highly participative - people rapidly ask questions and engage in dialog. For most speeches the audience listens, and possibly asks questions later. Being able to communicate effectively in a presentation is one of the important factors that will lead us to achieve success in today's global, competitive, and rapidly changing world. Competence in giving effective oral presentation can be a requisite for successful academic, personal, and professional students (Miles, 2013).

Concept of Anxiety

Anxiety according to Swift, Cyhlarova, Goldie, O'Sullivan, Bristow, Carson, Biggs, and Edwards, (2014) is an emotional state that can work for us as well as against us. It is something we all have in common, but where we often differ is in how we perceive these feelings of arousal and how we respond to them. Our life circumstances, our upbringing and our personalities can all be factors in why one person's exciting fairground ride will leave another person in abject terror. Feeling anxious isn't a sign of failure and there are times when it is important to ask for help from those around us, or from professionals. However, as we come to understand anxiety better, there is much that we can do as individuals to take steps to reduce its hold over us, and to

learn to appreciate our full range of emotions without fear that they will overtake us (Swift, et. al., 2014). Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life, whether it is about preparing for a job interview, meeting a partner's family for the first time, or the prospect of parenthood. Anxiety is associate with alterations to mental state, experienced as worry or apprehension perhaps, and physical symptoms such as raised heart rate and adrenaline is also understood to have effect only temporarily until the source of our anxiety has passed or we have learnt to cope with it (Critchley, 2009).

Anxiety is therefore one of a range of emotions that serves the positive function of alerting us to things we might need to worry about: things that are potentially harmful. More importantly, these emotions help us to evaluate potential threats and respond to them in an appropriate way, perhaps by quickening our reflexes or focusing our attention. Fear, like anxiety, is a familiar emotion precisely because it is part of everyone's experience and we consider it an essential component of our humanity, yet it is also a psychological, physiological and behavioural state we share with animals when confronted by a threat to our wellbeing or survival. Fear increases the body's arousal, expectancy, and neurobiological activity, and triggers specific behaviour patterns designed to help us cope with an adverse or unexpected situation (Swift, et. al., 2014).

Concept of Stuttering

Stuttering, also called stammering is a fluency disorder that results in involuntary disruptions of a person's verbal utterances when, for example, they are speaking or reading aloud (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Although stuttering is classified in DSM–IV as a disorder that is typically first diagnosed in childhood, it is found in all age-groups. In the latest research on the epidemiology of stuttering Craig et al, (2002) found out that most children who begins to stammer do so before adolescence, most commonly between 2 and 5 years of age, with the highest peak at around 4 years old. Cases of acquired stammering also occur, where an injury such as stroke or trauma to the brain results in brain damage (Bloodstein, 1995). The population prevalence of stammering can be over an entire lifespan (from 2 years to older age) to be 0.72%, with at least a 50% higher prevalence in males. This relatively low population prevalence is to be expected, because although 2–4% of people develop a stammer in childhood, many recover naturally in early adulthood (Bloodstein, 1995). The primary symptoms of stammering according to Craig, et al, (2003a) include; behavioural, psychological and social symptoms. Therefore if these symptoms are untreated in early childhood, there is a risk that the concomitant behaviours will become more pronounced (Bloodstein, 1995).

Stuttering becomes more severe when an individual is exposed to threatening or demanding stimuli and reduces when the stimulus is less threatening. For instance, anxiety-provoking situations such as speaking to an audience or to someone in authority, or to a listener who seems to be impatient or critical, are associated with increased stuttering (Bloodstein, 1995). Conversely, the frequency of stuttering is generally reduced in situations that are not anxiety-provoking, such as talking to a familiar person or someone not in authority. Studies have found that, when confronted with threatening social stimuli, people who stammer show physical arousal and report increased anxiety at the moment of stuttering (Craig et al, 2003a). Heart rate can accelerate just prior to stuttering, and when reading aloud people who stammer have been found to have greater heart rate variability, greater respiration changes and greater heart rate acceleration than non-stammering controls (Bloodstein, 1995; Craig et al, 2003a).

Types of Stuttering

Researchers used to think that stuttering was a mental health problem caused by trauma or fear. While it's possible for trauma to cause stuttering, it's rare. Instead, providers divide stuttering into two distinct types:

Developmental Stuttering: Developmental stuttering is the most common type of stuttering. Common among children ages 2-6 who are learning to speak, it usually goes away on its own. Five to 10 percent of children stutter at some point, and at least 75% outgrow it. For the remaining 25%, stuttering may continue to be a problem in adulthood. Developmental stuttering is often much worse when a child is anxious. The speech of children who stutter may improve when they speak for longer periods. This means the first few sentences of a conversation may be slow and halting, but as a child become more relaxed, they may stutter less. Developmental stuttering runs in families. This suggests a genetic link, and researchers have identified a few genes linked to stuttering. However, the specific causes of and triggers for developmental stuttering are still not fully understood.

Neurogenic Stuttering: Neurogenic stuttering is much less common than developmental stuttering. It's due to a problem with the brain caused by an injury, developmental issue, or disease. For example, some people develop a stutter following a stroke or a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Although anxiety may make neurogenic stuttering worse, anxiety is more closely tied to developmental stuttering.

Mitigating Strategies to Stuttering during Oral Presentation

Positive Visualization: There are two types of visualizations you can try to reduce your performance anxiety during a presentation. The first is to visualize yourself successfully giving a smooth performance before you go on stage. Secondly, try visualizing something that makes you feel happy and relaxed. Multiple studies have shown that people who visualize themselves delivering a smooth talk, perform better than those who don't (Lowenbraun, 2016).

Familiarity with Presentation Space: Make sure you're familiar with the space in which you'll be delivering your talk. That way, there's nothing surprising about it when it's time to present. If possible, visit the venue a few days before your talk, practice as much as possible, and ask questions about the set-up so you feel well prepared (Lowenbraun, 2016). Stuttering often occurs when we're distracted. Becoming familiar with the space and your surroundings will minimize those distractions and will reduce the fast heart rate and irregular breathing that can lead to stuttered speech.

Consistent Rehearsal: One of the ways to prevent stuttering in a presentation is to rehearse. Rehearsing is key to ensuring you're familiar with your material before you go onstage. If you have the opportunity to rehearse in the venue where you'll be delivering your talk, that's ideal. If you can't, try practicing in front of a comfortable audience, video record yourself, or even audio record yourself (Lowenbraun, 2016). It's difficult to memorize your entire presentation, but make sure you focus on your opening and closing. If you start off with smooth speech, you're likely to continue in that pattern. And of course, you want to end with a bang. Even if you end up stuttering in the middle of your speech, your audience will remember your impressive intro and conclusion.

Deep Breath: Before you go on stage, focus on the pace of your breathing. Inhaling and exhaling long, slow breaths will calm you and reduce your heart rate. Once you get a good feel for this controlled rate of breathing, try to be conscious of it when you're on stage. If the adrenaline kicks in, your heart races and your speech becomes stuttered, it will be difficult for your audience to understand you. Use deep breathing techniques to quell anxiety and get rid of its physical symptoms (Lowenbraun, 2016).

Nervous Energy through Body Movement: Think of the adrenaline your body gives you before a physical activity or competition. That adrenaline gives you the energy you need to perform. If you need a more physical way to channel your energy, move around a bit onstage (Lowenbraun, 2016). A slow, steady walk across the stage can set a rhythm that will slow down your thinking, set the speed of your speech, and reduce the confusion that often leads to stuttering. Make sure you're not pacing constantly or quickly, however, as that will distract your audience.

Maintenance of Slow Pace: When stuttered speech occurs, it's usually because your mind and mouth are not in sync. The obvious solution is for you to slow down. There are two easy solutions to reduce your speech pace. The first is to over-articulate. Use your lips, tongue, and jaw to exaggerate your word pronunciation. The second option is to pause. Speakers are so afraid of silence (Lowenbraun, 2016). A few seconds feels like forever to someone who's nervous. But when you stop talking, you allow your brain to catch up.

Sufficient Sleep: Many speakers think if they cram lines and practice until the very last minute, the presentation will go more smoothly. Over preparation can make more nervous and cause stuttered speech. To prevent this from happening, make sure you are well-rested for your talk (Lowenbraun, 2016). Studies show that people who skip sleep to study end up performing worse on tests and tasks than those who studied less but took the time to rest.

Influence of Anxiety on Stuttering

Social anxiety disorder according to American Psychiatric Association, (1994) involves the persistent fear of embarrassment and humiliation, with sufferers avoiding participating in events they think may be potentially distressing, for example public speaking, meetings and social occasions. The disorder is characterised by high levels of generalized anxiety, which can result in severe distress and impede functioning. The risk of stammering increases when an individual with a stammer engages in an anxiety-provoking social interaction, and the moment of stuttering is more likely associated with increased levels of physiological arousal and anxiety (Menzies et al, 1999). For many people, verbal communication is an important way to connect with others. Stuttering makes this communication more difficult and this may trigger anxiety, especially about social relationships (Villines, 2018).

The relationship between stuttering and anxiety has been strongly discussed over the decades and it is assumed that anxiety plays a vital role in the pathogenesis of this fluency disorder (Bloodstein, 1995; Craig et al, 2003a). However, few pieces of evidence are available associated to the stuttering but in some reports, it is evidenced that anxiety affects the rate of stuttering. Individuals who stutter often have a negative attitude during speaking situations and thus this potentiates the anxiety during such situations. Adults who stutter in particular often receive their negative attitudes from years of dealing with stuttering in a variety of situations and frequently believe that listeners view them as anxious (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Notwithstanding this, recent research suggests that many people who stutter do present with higher than normal levels of chronic anxiety. Indeed, negative experiences with others can fill a person's anxiety about stuttering, and this anxiety may make stuttering worse. Social fears and anxiety are a reasonable reaction to the symptoms of stuttering (Menzies et al, 1999).

Methodology

Comparative survey was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions in the state (University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Akwa Ibom State College of Education Afaha Nsit, and Akwa Ibom State College of Science and Technology). The population of the study comprised undergraduate students from the five institutions. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 20 undergraduate students from each of the 5 institutions, giving a total of 100 respondents for the study. The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire titled "Adoption of Mitigation Strategies against Anxiety related Stuttering during Presentation of English and Literature Students in Tertiary Institution Questionnaire (AMSASPELSTIQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.74 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as simple regression and t-test analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Research Question One

The research question sought to find out the extent of adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation among students in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in table 1.

Table 1: **Descriptive analysis of the extent of adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation among students of English language and English in literature in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Positive Visualization	100	12.00	19.00	15.5100	2.05724
Familiarity with Presentation Space	100	13.00	20.00	16.4000	2.06461
Consistent Rehearsal	100	11.00	20.00	17.2200	2.10137
Deep Breath	100	11.00	18.00	14.4300	2.08533
Nervous Energy through Body Movement	100	10.00	17.00	13.3500	2.02198
Maintenance of Slow Pace	100	9.00	16.00	12.3600	2.00262

Source: Field Survey

The above table 1 presents the results of the descriptive statistics of the extent of adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation among students of English language and English in literature in Akwa Ibom State tertiary institutions. From the result it was observed that the respondents adopted more of "consistent rehearsal" with the mean value of 17.22, this was seconded by "familiarity with presentation space" with the mean value of 16.40 while the least adopted strategies was "maintenance of slow pace" with the mean value of 12.36.

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature. In order to test the hypothesis, independent t-test analysis was used to analyze the data. (See table 2).

TABLE 2: **Independent t-test analysis of the difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English language and English in literature**

STRATEGIES	N	X	SD	t
Positive Visualization				
English	50	16.86	1.64	
				8.69*
Literature	50	14.16	1.46	
Familiarity with Presentation Space				
English	50	17.64	1.83	
				7.50*
Literature	50	15.16	1.46	
Consistent Rehearsal				
English	50	18.28	2.12	
				5.82*
Literature	50	16.16	1.46	
Deep Breath				
English	50	15.74	1.77	
				8.06*
Literature	50	13.12	1.47	
Nervous Energy through Body Movement				
English	50	14.54	1.80	
				7.26*
Literature	50	12.16	1.46	
Maintenance of Slow Pace				
English	50	13.58	1.72	
				7.67*
Literature	50	11.14	1.46	

*Significant at 0.05 level; df = 98; N= 100; critical t-value 1.980

The above table 2 presents the result of the independent t-test analysis of the difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature. From the result it was observed, with respect to all the mitigation strategies the obtained t-values (8.69, 7.50, 5.82, 8.06, 7.26, and 7.67) were all significant due to the fact that the critical t-value (1.980) was lower than all the obtained t-values. Therefore, the result means that there is significant difference in the adoption of the mitigation strategies against anxiety related stuttering during oral presentation between students of English and Literature. The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld.

Conclusion

Oral presentation is an important role in the world of work. Anxiety experienced in oral presentation can be debilitating and can influence students' adaptation to the target environment and ultimately the achievement of their educational goals. Stuttering results in involuntary disruption of a person's capacity to speak. It begins at an early age and can persist for life for at least 20% of those stutter at 2 years old. Although the aetiological role of anxiety in stuttering has not been determined, evidence is emerging that suggests people who stutter are more chronically and socially anxious than those who do not. This is not surprising, given that the symptoms of stuttering can be socially embarrassing and personally frustrating, and have the potential to impede vocational and social growth.

Recommendation

1. Government should provide effective treatment for children at early age and can help to reduce stuttering and be beneficial in preventing the potential development of anxiety and negative communication attitudes before they reach adulthood.

2. Speaker should be trained to be more aware of the preparations and strategies needed for presentation since the main keys to the success of delivering good presentation are highly determined by knowing how to prepare well and being able to use the strategies more appropriately and frequently.

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