



## COMMENTARY

# COMMUNICATING BY TELEPHONE: VIEWS OF A GROUP OF PEOPLE WITH STUTTERING IMPAIRMENT

SARAH E. JAMES and SHELAGH M. BRUMFITT

*University of Sheffield, U.K.*

PETER A. CUDD

*Sheffield, U.K.*

---

A study of the use of and attitudes towards the telephone by persons with stuttering impairment is presented. Data was collected by survey (postal questionnaire). Results indicate that making calls may be more problematic than answering them. Avoidance-like behaviours were more prevalent amongst younger adult stutterers than their older counterparts. Severe stutterers use the telephone least. Many stutterers surveyed see telephoning as being more problematic than 'face-to-face' communication and give a range of reasons for this. Telephoning difficulties can have wide ranging effects. Some implications of these findings are discussed. © 1999 Elsevier Science Inc.

**Key Words:** Stuttering; Telephone; Adult; Survey; Communication

---

## INTRODUCTION

Speech and language therapists frequently find that people presenting with stuttering impairment report increased difficulties in specific situations. One of these is using the telephone. In 1995, 95% of U.K. households contained a telephone (Social Trends, 1996). There is a rising trend towards telephone banking, insurance, helplines, and other telephone-based services. In 1998 it was reported that 1.1% of the U.K. workforce were employed in the telephone services industry, more than in the coal, steel, and car-making industries combined (Fernie & Metcalf, 1998). The increasing use of the telephone as a so-

---

Address correspondence to Dr. Shelagh Brumfitt, Department of Human Communication Sciences, University of Sheffield, 31, Claremont Crescent, Sheffield, S10 2TA, England; E-mail: s.m.brumfitt@sheffield.ac.uk

cial and business communication tool suggested to us the importance of investigating the impact of the telephone upon people who stutter.

There is some literature to support the notion that the telephone is rated as a feared situation by people with stuttering impairment. As early as 1957, Trotter and Bergman compared stutterers' and non-stutterers' reactions to different speech situations using the Stutterer's Reactions to Speech Situations scale of Johnson, Darley, and Spriesterbach (1942, revised 1963). They found that although, overall, stutterers wished to avoid speaking situations more than the non-stutterers, the ranking in terms of which situation was to be avoided did not vary between the two groups except where use of the telephone was involved, this being ranked higher by the stuttering subjects. Although it is possible that the relative novelty of the telephone as a means of communication in 1957 might have had some bearing on this outcome, more recent studies have also supported the claim that the telephone is problematic for stutterers.

Leith and Timmons (1983) sought to evaluate stutterers' reactions to the telephone as a speaking situation. Of the 130 subjects questioned, 72% placed making a call in their top three most feared speaking situations, this figure rising to 88% for severe stutterers. They also asked subjects to rate different types of call in terms of associated fear. Calling a younger person or a peer of the same sex were rated as the least feared telephone situations. A further six situations including calling a peer of the opposite sex or different ethnic group all received equal, slightly higher weightings. There were minor variations in response between subjects of different ethnic group and gender.

Other sources, though not presenting analyses of the stutterer's potential fear of the telephone nevertheless do indicate that problems exist. Doughty (1990) describes a case study in which hypnosis was used in an attempt to alleviate a stutterer's fear of the telephone, and Lee, McGough, and Peins (1976) discuss the desensitisation of stutterers to the telephone using relaxation techniques. Silverman (1977) suggests that, in severe cases, stutterers could consider using a Telecommunications Relay Service, a system designed primarily for the deaf in which text is relayed via an operator to another party. "Anti-stuttering" telephones are available which incorporate Delayed Auditory Feedback devices which can aid fluent speech. The existence of such services and products supports the notion that indeed the telephone can be problematic for stutterers.

Although suggesting that the telephone *is* a potential source of difficulty for stutterers, the question of which specific aspects of telephone conversation might give rise to these has not been addressed within the literature. Telephone talk provides a distinct situational setting (Drummond & Hopper, 1991) which allows only verbal and paralinguistic cues (Drummond & Hopper, 1991; Schegloff, 1979). Specific communication situations and settings can provide problems for stutterers, both in terms of increased stuttering frequency and, more particularly, in terms of anxiety and avoidance behaviours.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات