Fluency specialization in the EU: where are we now?

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Overview
• Background
• Goals
• ECSF specialization course
• ECSF developments
• EU, participant & external reviews
• EFS Association
• Future directions

Background
• Evolution in the field of SLT
  Broadening of SLT field
  More specialized knowledge available
• Specifically for fluency disorders
  ASHA 2001 Omnibus Survey: SLT caseload
  For SLT in all settings combined, 65% see fluency cases
  45% voice
  27% aphasia
  For SLT in school setting, 78% report to see fluency cases
  => stuttering is a disorder that SLTs commonly treat
  BUT Absolute numbers of individuals seen for a specific disorder:
  fluency: absolute lowest of all conditions that SLTs treat: 2.4%
  (Bernstein-Ratner 2006)

Background
• Lay public expects SLTs to treat fluency disorders but
  − Bernstein-Ratner (2006) "effective fluency treatment is not a skill that can be learned on
    the job since the absolute numbers of cases per clinician in the lowest of all disorders,
    allowing little opportunity to hone skills."
  − Sommers & Caruso (1995) "stuttering is one of the least understood of all communicative
    disorders and SLTs feel less comfortable in treating this disorder..."
  − Leahy et al., (2003) there is a small number of students in each year of education who
    show a specific interest in stuttering and fluency disorders
  − Yaruss & Quest (2002) "There is an accompanying sense in graduate curricula that it is
    an uncommon disorder and thus not merit a prominent place in the curriculum & clinical
    training"
  − Brisk, et al (1997) "The profession as a whole needs to offer quality continuing education
    programs, particularly in the area of treatment for preschool children and adolescents who
    stutter..."

Background: EU specific
• Bologna declaration (European Higher Education Area; Bologna, ‘98)
  1. System of easily readable and comparable degrees
  2. HE: 2 cycles: undergraduate (3 Y.; employment) & graduate (Ma., or PhD.)
  3. Credit system (ECTS) to ensure student mobility
  4. Student mobility and free movement shall be promoted.
  5. European co-operation in quality assurance shall be established.
  6. European dimension (curricula, interinstitutional co-operation, and student/teacher mobility schemes)

Goals ECSF- project ‘06~’08
• 8 partners in 5 EU countries
  Belgium: Lessius U College, U of Leuven, U College Bruges, Artevelde U College
  Germany: RWTH Aachen Clinic
  Ireland: Trinity College Dublin
  Malta: U of Malta
  Sweden: U of Gothenburg
• Goals:
  Harmonize fluency courses in curricula
  Development of a clinical specialization course
• Procedure:
  Erasmus curriculum development project
  Grant: 28955-C1-3-BB5-146-ERAMASMSU4DUC-1
  2 year development (06-08) & Implementation of Ac. Year (07-08)
Project management

- Structure: Steering committee, Workgroups
- 2y development phase
  * 2 two-day general meetings: preparation, discussion, development
  * 3 two-day steering committee meetings: in between evaluation & steering measures
  * In between subgroup meetings & development of work packages/course content
  * Evaluation: Students, EU commission, external specialist evaluator

- Steps
  1. Acquaintance with partner’s curricula, learning outcomes: knowledge, skills & competencies > entrance levels, specialization course
  2. Core course: unified learning outcomes (based on professional, CURDUL & HLP profiles)
  3. Specialization course: unified course

Development specialization course

- Search for:
  * optimal learning environment
  * compatibility with current SLT workload
  * cost efficient
  * optimal student recruitment

- Needed to include:
  - lecturing + self-study
  - clinical internship
  - evaluation

- Different possible models:
  1. Model 1: Uniform course taught at all participating institutes: pros-cons
  2. Model 2: One period of intensive lecturing (e.g., 2-3 weeks) at location X followed by clinical internship: pros-cons
  3. Model 3: Several periods of intensive lecturing at different locations with simultaneous clinical internship: pros-cons

ECSF specialization course

- Model 3:
  1. 2 intensive weeks - 2 EU locations
  2. In between home-follow-up sessions
  3. Clinical internship after IW1: observation + documented therapy
  4. More efficient learning: preparatory reading & home assignments
  5. Portfolio evaluation system: assessing acquired competencies
  6. Several therapeutic models

ECSF specialization course

- Specialized clinical training under supervision of a fluency specialist
  - min. 120 h. (max 20 observation)

- External mentor:
  - senior professional (or peer mentoring)
  - after formal approval (criteria)
  - min. 8 sessions

- ECSF-coach:
  - guiding & steering of learning process
  - portfolio follow up & evaluation
  - min. 4 sessions
  - oral case presentations during final session

- E-learning platform
EU, participant and external review

- EU commission: “a very well performed and managed project where all planned outcomes are being fulfilled”
- Participants: Overall session formats: all averaged “very good” to “excellent”
  - Practical & useful information:
  - Lecturer’s ability to present information:
  - Overall course evaluation:
  - Working points: “long lecturing days”, timely feedback, …
- ASHA fluency specialist
  - Very suitable pedagogical approach
  - Overall: "it is simply a miracle to see the level of organization, content and commitment that has gone into this effort."

ECSF developments

- Consortium enlargement: 12+4 partners – 10 countries
  - U of Turku, Finland; ESSA, Portugal
  - Utrecht UAS, & Fontys UAS, NVST, Erasmus MC, The Netherlands
  - Stammering Support Center Leeds & Michael Palin Center London, UK
- Credit upgrade: 20>25 ECs
- Content update: + cluttering, group work …
- >150 participants from 25 (non) EU countries
- 2016: start 9th course cycle
- 5 EU symposia
- Postgraduate workshops: cluttering, coaching, solution focused brief Tx …

European Fluency Specialists

Mission statement:
To promote the highest standards of care, education, and research in the area of fluency disorders among SLTs in order to improve the quality of life for individuals who stutter and clutter.

ECSF developments

- ECSF=significant step to become fluency specialist
- Additional steps?
  - Setup CPD follow-up system for graduates
  - Future recognition of EU fluency specialists, both ECSF graduates as non ECSF graduates.
    - led to the development of EFS: EU Fluency Specialists
    - 2 years with meetings in Antwerp, Leeds, Dublin, Malta

European Fluency Specialists

- SLTs who distinguish themselves by their in-depth knowledge and skills in assessing, evaluating, and treating people with fluency disorders.
- Clinicians and/or academics certified by the EFS Board after a process of review and approval of their clinical and/or academic work, CPD, and participation in discussion groups.
- Certification is renewed every three years in order to maintain the highest standards of care to persons with fluency disorders and education in the area of fluency disorders to students.

Development steps

- Election of EFS board
- Development of certification process
- Website development
- Set-up of a European Foundation
Certification process

• Initial application: eligibility review
• Certification: 80h additional academic/clinical work
  10h additional CPD work
• Board review > EU fluency specialist
• Annual follow-up
• Every 3y:
  300h of academic/clinical work
  100h of CPD work
  30h of discussion group work

Advantages of EFS certification

• Membership of the group of the most highly qualified fluency specialists in Europe, as recorded on the ‘Find a Specialist list’.
• International recognition as a specialist, which can be used to inform national professional bodies and user organizations.
• Opportunities to acquire and maintain the highest standard of education and support through access to activities, such as webinars, online interview activities and discussion groups.

www.europeanfluencyspecialists.eu

Nan Bernstein Ratner

"As chair of IFA’s instruction and training committee and IFA president-elect, I am delighted to see a world-leading consortium such as yours move forward to ensure that our patients and families receive the highest possible standard of care."

Jane Fraser

"The Stuttering Foundation is delighted to endorse this important initiative to develop a European Fluency Specialist status for therapists working in our field. It is critically important that there be more therapists with specialist knowledge and skills; this European Fluency Specialist registration is a dynamic process of establishing and maintaining registration, which requires ongoing clinical professional development. This will help to ensure that services provided will be of a quality to improve the lives of those who stutter, our collective mission."

Welcome to EFS

European Fluency Specialists are speech and language therapists and speech-language pathologists who hold knowledge and skills in creating, evaluating, and treating persons with fluency disorders (i.e., stammering, stuttering). They are all clinicians and/or academics certified by the International Fluency Association (IFA) and are registered as specialists in their clinical or academic work, comment professional development and participation in discussion groups.

Certification is reviewed every three years to ensure that standards of practice and the quality of fluency disorders and education in the field of fluency disorders are maintained.

Become a certified specialist
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