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Bridging the Gaps in the Discourse on Stuttering

*Dialog bez barier – kompleksowa interwencja
logopedyczna w jękaniu* [Dialogue Without Barriers:
Comprehensive Speech Therapy Intervention in Stuttering],
Polish extended edition, eds. K. Węsierska, H. Sønsterud,
Agere Aude, Chorzów 2021, pp. 672



The Polish publishing market has been systematically replenished over the years with various types of publications on stuttering. It is enough to mention the following books from the last 15 years: Maria Faściszewska, *Jękanie. Wypowiedzi dialogowe i monologowe osób jękających się* [Stuttering: Dialogue and Monologue Statements of People Who Stutter] (2020); Agata Sakwerda, *Spokojnie, to tylko jękanie* [Relax, It's Just Stuttering] (2020); Zbigniew Tarkowski and Agnieszka Okraśńska, *Jękanie w wieku szkolnym* [Stuttering at School Age] (2020); Carl W. Dell Jr., *Terapia jękania u dzieci w młodszym wieku szkolnym* [Therapy of Stuttering in Children of Younger School Age], translated by Lucyna Jankowska-Szafarska (2019); *Zaburzenia płynności mowy – teoria i praktyka* [Speech Fluency Disorders: Theory and Practice], edited by Katarzyna Węsierska and Mikołaj Witkowski (vol. 2, 2019); *Zaburzenia płynności mowy* [Speech Fluency Disorders],

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edited by Katarzyna Węsierska and Katarzyna Gaweł (2018); *Życie z zacięciem. Integralny przewodnik po jąkaniu* [Living with Stuttering: An Integral Guide to Stuttering], edited by Kamil Kupiec, Lucyna Jankowska-Szafarska, Beata Suligowska, and Roman Kara (2017); Jolanta Góral-Półrola, *Jąkanie. Analiza procesu komunikacji słownej* [Stuttering: Analysis of the Verbal Communication Process] (2016); *Zaburzenia płynności mowy – teoria i praktyka* [Speech Fluency Disorders: Theory and Practice], edited by Katarzyna Węsierska (vol. 1, 2015); Barry Guitar and Theodore J. Peters, *Dobór metod terapii jąkania. Przewodnik dla logopedów* [Selecting Methods for Stuttering Therapy: A Guide for Speech Therapists], translated by Katarzyna Gaweł (2014); Peter Schneider, *Kto-kto-kto robi hu-hu-hu?* [Who-Who-Who Does Hoo-Hoo-Hoo?], translated by Małgorzata Kądzioła (2014); Elaine Kelman and Alison Nicholas, *Praktyczna interwencja w jąkaniu wczesnodziecięcym* [Practical Intervention in Early Childhood Stuttering], translated by Małgorzata Kądzioła (2013); Eelcode Geus, *Czasami po prostu się jękam. Książka dla dzieci w wieku od 7 do 12 lat* [Sometimes I Just Stutter: A Book for Children Aged 7 to 12 Years], translated by Marta Węsierska (2013); Zbigniew Tarkowski, *Psychosomatyka jąkania* [Psychosomatics of Stuttering] (2007); and Mieczysław Chęciek, *Jąkanie – diagnoza, terapia, program* [Stuttering: Diagnosis, Therapy, Program] (2007). These scientific and popular science publications, in addition to numerous scientific articles, constitute a rich source of knowledge about stuttering for speech therapists, doctors, psychologists, educators, teachers, parents, people experiencing stuttering themselves, and students preparing to work with clients/patients/students who stutter.

The textbook *Dialogue Without Barriers*, which Polish readers have been able to consult since the end of 2021, is another interesting book on this speech fluency disorder. In its introduction, it is stated twice that the Polish-Norwegian cooperation and the invitation of an international group of excellent specialists (from Australia, Belgium, Greece, Canada, Lebanon, Malta, Germany, Poland, the USA, and the UK) is a recipe for an “exceptional” textbook (p. 9 and 10). A verification of this thesis can ultimately lead to only one conclusion: Yes, this is an extraordinary book! Why?

The foreword by editors Katarzyna Węsierska and Hilda Sønsterud is a kind of invitation to talk about stuttering, and the

inclusion of profiles of the 35 authors (11 Polish and 24 foreign) at the beginning of the book follows the good tradition of presenting all interlocutors before the discussion even starts. Thanks to this, an actual “dialogue without barriers” is also initiated between the reader and the authors, or the reader and the editors. In order to make the reader feel like a full-fledged, active participant of the deliberations, a “Space for Notes” is left at the end of the book (p. 19). The notes, which are to be made by a reflective reader, can add new remarks to the book’s content or further questions on stuttering that differ from those placed under each chapter of the handbook.

An electronic version of the book, available free of charge (sic!) on the LOGOLab website (<https://www.logolab.edu.pl/>), has already impressed the public; a traditional paper book is now also available on the market. Information about further chapters of the handbook, the editorial team, and the translators have been available since January 2022 on the Facebook page “LOGOLab. Good Communication” (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/logolab>). This also serves as an overview of the content and reveals some secrets from the editing and publishing work, confirming the extremely hard work of all those involved in this two-volume publication (in Polish and English) and the project implemented by the University of Silesia in Katowice, the Norwegian Arctic University in Tromsø, and the Agere Aude Foundation for Knowledge and Social Dialogue. Participants of the International Logopaedic Conference “Speech Fluency Disorders. Theory and Practice. Edition IV” (2021).

The first chapters of the handbook refer to the main lines of reflection undertaken in recent books on stuttering, but also in the pedagogical, psychological, or medical literature (e.g., Kaźmierczak 2018; Węsierska, Krawczyk 2017; Moćko, Węsierska 2015; Błachnio, Przepiórka 2013; Humeniuk 2012; Stecko 2012; Sommer et al. 2002): theory versus speech therapy practice, the multifaceted nature of stuttering, becoming an effective therapist, counselling clients and their loved ones, social attitudes towards stuttering, acceptance of stuttering, and quality of life with stuttering.

The reading of more than 650 pages opens with two complementary chapters: “Between Research and Speech Therapy Practice: Towards Integrated Speech and Language Therapy,” written by Norwegian researchers Kirsten Costain and Hilda Sønsterud, and “How

Do I Become an Effective Speech Therapist Specialising in Fluency Disorders?” by Kurt Eggers, coordinator of the European Clinical Specialization in Fluency Disorders (www.ecsf.eu). The subjective perspective emphasized in both texts, which takes into account the needs and resources of stutterers, is justified especially in light of contemporary considerations of evidence-based practice, the assumptions of which were one of the guideposts for the entire publication (p. 9): the practice of an effective speech therapist is based on evidence from research, and the goals of therapy are set jointly by the clinician and the client, who enter into a therapeutic alliance.

The questions of how to help and support the client and their social environment and how to organize speech therapy counselling are answered in Chapter 3. The interdisciplinary (speech therapy, psychological, and linguistic) team of Ewa Ficek, Barbara Jezioreczak, and Katarzyna Węsierska developed unified guidelines for the attitudes and communication skills of the actors of the therapeutic alliance: speech therapists, people close to the stutterers, and the clients themselves (of various ages). The following chapter by Mary Weidner and Kenneth O. St. Louis partly extends and completes the issues discussed earlier, but also initiates a discussion on improving the quality of life of people who stutter in social situations. The seven steps of an intervention plan for modifying attitudes towards stuttering characterized within are a kind of primer for any advocate of change. A detailed assessment of the ABCs—the affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects—of stuttering in speech therapy diagnosis was made by American researcher Martine Vanryckeghem in Chapter 6.

The Polish-language handbook presents both the Polish perspective on research and development of speaking fluency, as well as action proposals developed in other countries, which is extremely valuable. As a result of such a “dialogue without borders” and the mutual exchange of experiences, the reader will find a wide range of practical suggestions for programs, methods, techniques, and tools for assessing these stuttering ABCs: *The Behavior Assessment Battery* (BAB), *The Communication Attitude Test for Adults Who Stutter* (BigCAT), *The Communication Attitude Test for School-Age Children Who Stutter* (CAT), *The Communication Attitude Test for Preschool and Kindergarten Children Who Stutter* (KiddyCAT), *The Wright and Ayre*

Stuttering Self-Rating Scale (WASSP), *The Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering* (OASES), *The Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale* (FNES), *Erickson S24*, *Unhelpful Thoughts and Beliefs about Stuttering* (UTBAS/UTBAS6), *The Self-Efficacy Scale for Adult Stutterers* (SESAS), and *The Self-Efficacy Scale for Adolescents* (SEA). There are also some therapy tips: *Camperdown*, *KIDS*, *Lexipontix*, *Multi-Dimensional Individualized Stuttering Therapy* (MIST), *Modification of Stuttering* (more fluent stuttering), and *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (ACT). In addition to the impressive list of programs, methods, techniques, tools, and strategies referred to in the handbook, the entire book included numerous examples and tips for both researchers and practitioners, which encourages anyone wishing to supplement their knowledge and improve their professional skills to read it. The extensive bibliographic listings, including recommended literature after each chapter, are another valuable element of the handbook.

As we have noted, the authors of the chapters do not focus only on the subject matter—the speech fluency disorder of stuttering and methods, techniques, strategies, or possible forms of speech therapy treatment—although this is very valuable information. The book's narrative seems to be dominated by the motto, “Person first!” It is this thought that informs contemporary speech therapy intervention in stuttering. The authors of the handbook reflect extensively on interpersonal relationships, building a therapeutic alliance, and enhancing the quality of life of a person who stutters.

The question of whether laughter and humor can become essential components of stuttering therapy is answered by Erik X. Raj (Chapter 19) and Joseph Agius (Ch. 20). Identification, de-sensitization, open and conscious stuttering, and reducing avoidance strategies are discussed by Hilda Sønsterud (Ch. 16) and therapists with personal experience of stuttering, Carolyn Cheasman and Rachel Everard (Ch. 5). When juxtaposed with the chapter entitled *Bullying Experienced by Children Who Stutter: Ways of Coping and Prevention* by Marta Węsierska, Marilyn Langevin, and Katarzyna Węsierska, the tones of acceptance and tolerance resonate even more clearly. Moreover, the specific suggestions indicated here, such as the popular LOGOLab workshops in Poland or the *InterACT* program, broaden the range of possibilities in the context of speech therapy

and pedagogical prevention. Together with guidelines for diagnosis and various forms of therapy—individual, group, self-help, or self-therapy—they actually create a picture of a comprehensive speech therapy intervention for stuttering (as indicated in the subtitle of the publication): an intervention based on the latest scientific research and indications developed in multi-specialist and international teams, taking into account mono- or bilingualism (see Chapter 17) of patients with a stuttering experience.

The handbook *Dialogue Without Barriers* presents the pillars on which bridges are being built over gaps in the discourse on stuttering: between clients and therapists, between clients and their parents, between parents and therapists, between practitioners and researchers, between editors and chapter authors, and, finally, between authors and editors and readers. The multidisciplinary approach, multifaceted nature, commitment, reliability, essentiality, modernity, and topicality of knowledge, as well as the criticality, reflexivity, openness, and respect for the subjectivity of each participant in the reading dialogue and the preventive/diagnostic/therapeutic process in stuttering are certainly solid foundations here. There should definitely be more such great handbooks. Unfortunately, the English-language version, which should be published soon, will not include chapters written only by Polish authors, as they are certainly worthy of international distribution.

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