

# Parental functions, the child and their implications for stuttering

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A study conducted at the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Santa Maria, RS, Brazil.

**Financial support:** Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - Brasil (CAPES) - Funding Code 001

**Conflict of interests:** Nonexistent

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Received on September 13, 2024  
Received in a revised form on October 4,  
2024  
Accepted on December 18, 2024

Editor: Renata Furlan

**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** to explore the dynamics between parental functions and children who stutter, in order to understand the meaning of stuttering.

**Methods:** an exploratory research with a qualitative approach based on Content Analysis. Three children diagnosed with stuttering, of both sexes, and their parents, participated in the research. In the data collection, footage of the interaction of the children with their parents was used, which were analyzed and generalized into thematic categories. Content analysis had the conceptual support of psychoanalytic theory and occurred in three moments: pre-analysis; the exploration of the material and the treatment of the results obtained and their interpretation.

**Results:** the results showed the existence of an articulation between the stuttering of the children and their parental speech, with symptomatic speech being a way of preserving the subjective position of the children, since they need to be separated from their mothers and assume their own desire.

**Conclusion:** it was concluded that, from psychoanalysis point of view, stuttering is a symptom of family dynamics, being linked to the field of the Other and the parental function.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis; Stuttering; Child



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## INTRODUCTION

Thinking about language in the precepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis implies a path that is singular, since each individual has a unique experience with language, and at the same time universal, provided that there are structures that govern how all subjects relate to language and subjective development. In Lacanian Psychoanalysis, this is linked to the Other (culture, society and its linguistic codes) that subjects “speak”, marking them with desires, values and meanings that are specific to their culture and families. This process begins even before the baby is born, since he/she is already inserted into a symbolic network made up of words, meanings and expectations that constitute him/her, unconsciously. In addition, it involves a process related to the psychic operations of alienation and separation that will make it possible to establish the symbolic process, placing the child in the field of language and giving rise to the possibility of constructing a place in the parental discourse<sup>1</sup>.

Seen from this perspective, parental functions and language play a key role in the psychic constitution of the child and in the formation of their symptoms<sup>2,3</sup>. At birth, children are not ready or concluded. They are born premature, both physically and psychologically, which places them in a position of dependence on another similar person who can provide them with both physical and psychological care. This position is assumed, firstly, by the big Other - the maternal function - who attributes meanings to the manifestations of the baby (screams, cries, etc.), inserting them into the field of language. However, for the children to become a speaking being, that is, someone capable of using language to express their desires, thoughts and identity, they need to be inserted into the field of language in which they have been placed (absorbing and integrating the meanings, rules and symbols of the language that already exist around them). Therefore, the path that leads the child into the world of words is, according to Psychoanalysis, the process of constitution of the subject<sup>1</sup>.

The process of subjective constitution will give the subject the possibility of insertion into the field of language. This occurs through two psychic operations, alienation and separation, both constructed from the relationship of the subject with the Other<sup>4</sup>.

In the first moment - of alienation - the child is taken in by the absence of the mother, lodging itself in the assumptions of meaning that the mother attributes to the manifestations of the child. Thus, the child

temporarily occupies the place of the object of maternal desire, participating in the field of language and, therefore, immersed in it<sup>1</sup>.

The second constitutive operation of the subject - separation - is the one that will allow the child to separate from the maternal Other. It is the time when the paternal function enters the scene, when the third separator is constituted, which institutes the Law and allows the child to begin his or her attempts to live an autonomous life<sup>1,5</sup>. This function prohibits the mother from keeping the child as her object of desire and prohibits the child from remaining in this place.

Then, the operations of alienation and separation define the subjective constitution as a subtle and precocious psychic process that will enable the advent of a desiring subject, that is, a speaking human being. It is in this process that the subject has access to speech. For Psychoanalysis, speech is not an act of phonation, but rather an act of the subject, since speaking means enduring the void and distancing oneself psychically from the Other<sup>6</sup>. Speaking means no longer being in symbiosis, in completeness with the Other, and then, submitting oneself to the Law of the paternal function, realizing that one is lacking and assuming his/her own desire.

Thus, speaking implies not only making sounds, but also assuming a position before the Other, breaking with the idea of symbiosis. It is in the process of separation that speech becomes a subjective act, that is, of the subject itself. What happens is that in some children, something becomes problematic during the transition from alienation to separation, in such a way that the Other maintains an attribution of knowledge that makes it difficult for the child to be the protagonist of his or her own life, making it difficult to position oneself before this Other and sustain his/her own desire. In this sense, the maternal function insists on keeping the child dependent on her, weakening the paternal discourse and also the psychic autonomy of the child. Then, the mother-child relationship is compromised, since there is difficulty for the child to leave this dualistic position.

In order to avoid being imprisoned in the traps of maternal desire, the child needs to find a way out, and can “construct” a symptom, demonstrating a particular way of organizing itself in language. This, in turn, is understood as a defense response to alienation, preserving the subjective condition of the child and an appeal to summon the paternal function. Here we find symptomatic speech, such as stuttering, which can be understood as a response by the child to the position it

occupies in the discourse and in the parental dynamics. Lacan refers to the symptom as a “fact of language”, which is a manifestation in the field of language that reveals the particularities of the subjective process. It is, therefore, through symptoms in speech that the unconscious manifests itself, showing the tensions, deficiencies and desires that mark the subject in its relationship with the Other.

It is from how the family dynamics is established in its various nuances and events that they will have an effect on the child, especially in its process of constitution and in the formation of its symptoms. Thus, it is through listening to this dynamics that it will be possible to understand the position that each person occupies and how each person positions themselves in relation to the other. It is through this listening that the symptom of the child will be given meaning, since it emerges as something that needs to be understood.

If the symptom is a defense of the subject and an enigma to be deciphered, and if the subject uses the word as his/her vehicle par excellence, wouldn't there be something peculiar to be heard in stuttering, especially in the relationship between the triad - mother, father and child? It is from this perspective that the objective of the study is outlined: to explore the dynamics between parental functions and children who stutter, so that it is possible to understand the meaning of stuttering.

## METHODS

### Ethical considerations

During the development of this research, some ethical precepts were considered. First, regarding the conduct of the research, it was only conducted after the approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the *Universidade Federal de Santa Maria*, RS, Brazil (approval on April 19, 2016, under CAEE number 54654116.4.0000.5346 and opinion number 1,506,763).

After reading and clarifying any doubts, the parents of the children signed the *TCLE*, consenting to their participation and the participation of the child in the research. In addition, they consented to the scientific publication of the results, in accordance with Resolution No. 196/96 of the National Health Council<sup>7</sup>. The children also gave oral consent.

The research also included the ethical principles of the Federal Council of Psychology<sup>8</sup> (FCP) outlined in resolution No. 016/2000, which addresses issues regarding the protection of the rights, dignity, and

well-being of subjects involved in research. To guarantee the confidentiality of the identities of the participants, the statements were identified by the letters F (Father) and M (Mother), which correspond to the interlocutors of the children, and S (Subject/Child), followed by a number that represents the order in which the interactions between the child and their interlocutors were filmed.

### Study design

This study has an exploratory nature and a qualitative approach. This design is justified insofar as the study worked with psychological issues that could not be quantified. Qualitative research, in turn, is the most appropriate way to work with facts of reality that cannot or should not be quantified, such as motivations, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes<sup>9</sup>.

### Participants

The study included 3 children diagnosed with stuttering, one girl (identified as S1) and two boys (identified as S2 and S3) aged between 2 and 8 years - the period in which the referred speech pathology occurred<sup>8</sup> and, also, the parents of these children.

In relation to the children, S1, aged 7 years and 11 months, was in the third year of elementary school, had no siblings, had been receiving speech therapy for approximately two years, and had never received psychological care. S2 was 8 years and 11 months old, was in the third year of elementary school, had three siblings (one of them a twin and another older sister whose age was not reported), had been receiving speech therapy for approximately two years, and had never received psychological care. S3, aged 4 years and 10 months, was in preschool B, had no siblings, was not currently receiving speech therapy, but had been receiving care for approximately one year prior to participating in the research, and had never received psychological care.

Regarding the parents (father and mother), they all lived with their children. Mothers were on average 37 years old and fathers were 36 years old and they were at that time. The father of S1 is a machine operator and his mother is a saleswoman. The father and mother of S2 were teachers. The father of S3 was a traffic instructor and his mother was a speech therapist.

## Subject selection procedures

The selection of study participants - children and their parents - was carried out through the Waiting List for Care and the Patient Registration File at a Speech, Hearing and Language Care Center of a public higher education institution in a city in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul. The stuttering children were selected through specific speech-language assessments<sup>10</sup>.

Both Waiting List and Patient Records Folder presented general information about the identification of the patient, information about the initial complaint, questions about the general and language development of the child, among other aspects. Specifically on the Waiting List, which comes from the Reception of the aforementioned Service, a screening is conducted by students in the 7<sup>th</sup> period of the Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences Major, which were supervised by a professor. This interview includes the questions already mentioned and, in addition, the results of the performed assessments pertinent to the case and necessary referrals (therapy and guidance). In the Patient Records Folder, in addition to the questions previously mentioned, there is some information about the assessments and therapy in progress with the child, as well as referrals made, among other aspects.

In the area of Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences, a child is considered to stutter when he/she presents at least 3% of stuttering-like disfluencies (called stuttering-like disfluencies) in the specific evaluation of spontaneous speech, and may or may not present physical concomitants (such as avoiding eye contact, facial, head or limb movements and dispersive sounds) and 10% of common disfluencies (known as disfluencies present during the speech of a fluent speaker)<sup>11-14</sup>. In addition to being stuttering children of both sexes, to be included in the research, they could not present hearing loss, other associated communication alterations (such as language delay/disorder, phonological deviation), syndromic condition or other associated neurological disorders.

During the data collection period (first half of 2016 to the first half of 2018), the parents of five children were contacted, in addition to the three who were part of the sample. One of the children no longer stuttered. Among the other four, in three cases the mothers were not interested in participating in the research. The parents of these children were also contacted, but they stated that participation would depend on the mother of the child. And one rescheduled the appointment several times and did not show up for the interview.

After the cases were selected, their parents were contacted by telephone by the researcher based on the data available on the Waiting List for Care and in the Records Folder of this Service and invited to participate in the study so that the filming of the child and his/her parents could be conducted.

## Instruments and procedures for data collection

Data were collected by observing a scene of interaction between the child and his/her parents, with the production of free play with use of the toy house as an instrument. The toy house contained furniture belonging to a house, dolls (father, mother, son, daughter, baby, grandmother and grandfather) and some household utensils (pots, plates, cups, broom, etc.).

The scenes occurred as follows: (1) ten minutes of free play with the toy house between the child and the mother; (2) ten minutes of free play with the toy house between the child and the father and (3) ten minutes of free play with the toy house between the child, the mother and the father. At some moments, the interaction between the child and each of the parents was conducted separately, with this situation being justified with the objective of not having interference between maternal and paternal discourse.

The scenes occurred in the classrooms of the referred higher education institution, without the presence of the researcher during the filming in single and individual meetings (dyads and triads). They were filmed with a digital camera and later transcribed orthographically and analyzed.

## Data analysis

Thematic content analysis<sup>7</sup> and the conceptual framework of psychoanalytic theory were used to analyze the obtained data. This analysis occurs in three stages: pre-analysis; exploration of the material; and processing and interpretation of the results obtained. Therefore, the following procedure was followed: listening to and orthographically transcribing the filmed scenes (interaction between the child and their interlocutors) so that the analysis of this material would be possible. Based on this analysis, the data were compared, which resulted in two categories, enabling interpretation in accordance with the theoretical basis of the study - psychoanalytic theory.

In the analysis of the questions arising from these interactions, three points were observed by the

researcher in each of the scenes: (1) the interaction between the interlocutor and the child, (2) the behavior of the interlocutor in relation to the speech of the child (permission, inhibition, distress, among others), and (3) the behavior among the triad (this was observed only in the scene of interaction of the triad). From these observations, a category was formed - The influence of

parental functions on the construction of symptomatic speech (stuttering) in children.

## RESULTS

Three children and three pairs of parents participated in the research. Tables 1 and 2 help to visualize the data of the research participants.

**Table 1.** Data of children and frequency of speech-language and psychological therapy

Subject	Sex	Age	School Year	Speech-Language Therapy	Psychological Therapy
S1	F	7:11	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Yes (approx. 2 years)	No
S2	M	8:11	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Yes (approx. 2 years)	No
S3	M	4:10	Pre-B	No (at the moment)*	No

Source: Waiting List and Medical Records of SAF/UFSM patients

Captions: S1: child 1; S2: child 2; S3: child 3.

\*Child had been receiving speech-language therapy for approximately 1 year

**Table 2.** Age and profession of the parents of the children participating in the research

Subject	Age	Profession
S1 Mother	38	Saleswoman
S1 Father	30	Machine operator
S2 Mother	45	Physical education teacher
S2 Father	47	Physical education teacher
S3 Mother	30	Speech therapist
S3 Father	31	Traffic instructor

Source: data collected during interviews with the researcher.

Captions: S1: child 1; S2: child 2; S3: child 3.

From the collection and analysis of data from filming the interaction between the stuttering child and his/her parents, it was verified that the situations that revealed stuttering in the cases studied were those in which, in front of his interlocutor, the child needed to position himself/herself as a subject, express himself in his own name and, therefore, support his desire. When called by the demand of the interlocutor to accept his/her desire, it was observed that stuttering was triggered and/or accentuated.

The obtained data seems to highlight a problem in relation to the transition from alienation to separation (specifically observed in the interactions in which the mother was present) and the entry of the father, the depriving father, which marks the second half of Oedipus, causing the The child progresses to the third period very fragile (observed in interactions in which the father was present), which will be discussed later. Thus,

it is understood that stuttering would be a symptomatic manifestation that would appear precisely at the point where the paternal function became problematic. Symptomatic speech would be a way of preserving the subjective position of the child since he/she needs to separate himself/herself from his/her mother and assume his/her own desire.

The data from the different interactions were grouped into one category: the influence of parental functions on the construction of symptomatic speech (stuttering) in the child, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

## DISCUSSION

The influence of parental functions on the construction of symptomatic speech (stuttering) in children:



The way in which the child positions himself/herself as a subject and manifests his/her symptoms derives from the symbolic position he/she occupies in the parental desire and discourse, since he/she will respond from the position of this place<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, based on Lacanian precepts, it is known that this position of the child in relation to the discourse of the Other is constructed from the operations of “subject causation” - alienation and separation<sup>4</sup>. The two operations, while enshrining the impossibility of the child to remain in the place of the object of maternal desire, precipitate the operation of splitting and separation in relation to the maternal Other<sup>2</sup>.

It is the operation of separation that will enable the emergence of the subject, allowing him/her to leave the alienation from the maternal Other, to separate himself/herself, and to face his/her own desire<sup>1</sup>. When this process of separation encounters some difficulty in establishing itself, a symptom appears that can be understood as a form of defense against a subjective position, against remaining in alienation. This seems to justify one of the reasons why, in comparison with other interactions, stuttering appeared more frequently in the interaction with the mother, intensifying in situations in which the child needed, in some way, to express himself/herself in his/her own name and sustain his/her desire. Whenever the child was called to assume his/her desire, whether through a maternal question or by the expression of a desire of the child, the symptomatic speech was triggered intensely.

In this sense, some excerpts from the interactions allow us to demonstrate what was previously mentioned. The first excerpt refers to a scene between the mother and S1 child. The child is involved in a game where he/she prepares food, and then asks his/her mother: – Ma, ma, mom, I ca ca ca can I have one more, one more plate for then, like, if I wanted to put the things? The mother answers yes and they both continue playing. Then, the mother asks: – Are you going to wash the dishes? – Yes, I’m gonna! Answers the child. And the child continues: – Yes! Tomorrow, the day after, tomorrow is you, okay?

The second section refers to the interaction between the mother and the S2 child. Right at the beginning of the game, the mother questions the child: – Okay... and tell me something, my love... what... what do you think... what can we play? Huh? Give mom a suggestion, so we can play! And the child answers: – Uhum... oh more, more, more oh, more more more we can rake, right mom! The mother answers yes and the

game continues. The child then decides to organize the furniture in the house: – A wardrobe, right? And where do you put the wardrobe? The mother looks at the little house and replies: – Yeah, I don’t know either. Will this wardrobe fit there? (pointing to a room in the house). The child responds: – Let me see if it fits! Oh, let me look...but look at the sofa. Continuing the game, the mother decides to propose to the child a picnic game with the family of dolls: – What do you think of us having a picnic with this whole family together here? Huh? When responding, the child stutters a lot: – Ma ma ma mom but not at home, right? – No...picnics are always outside! Answers the mother.

The last excerpt comes from the interaction between the mother and the S3 child. The child takes a piece of furniture from the house and asks: – Ma mommy, and what is this one? The mother replies that it is a stove. – Mommy, mommy, here I put the stove on! The two continue organizing the house and the mother puts the double bed in the room. The child then says: – I know! Just like our bed! Now leave a little space here (pushes the double bed to the side) and I’ll put the baby on the side. – Okay! replied the mother. – D done! The child speaks.

It was noted that where symptomatic speech emerged, there was an attempt at separation that the child launched, seeking to free himself/herself from the desire of the Other, thus observing the emergence of a subject<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the symptom of the child emerges as an attempt or need to separate himself/herself from this Other, and leave the place of object of maternal desire. Thus, the formation of the symptom occurred as a form of protection and resistance in relation to maternal alienation<sup>1</sup>.

In this process, a situation brought up by S3 child in interaction with his mother is also important, articulating the impasses lodged in the separation operation. Mother and child are organizing the furniture in the little house and identifying the dolls. The mother picks up the baby doll and asks the child: – Look! Is that you? The child answers no and picks up a doll and says: – This one is my little sister that I’m going to have! He looks at his mother and says: – And don’t come with that story that I’m not going to have a little sister! Furthermore, at other times, the baby becomes the second little sister of the child. In this sense, it seems that wanting a little sister is collaborating to make a possible fusional and subjugated relationship with the mother more difficult, since she would ensure differentiation<sup>15</sup>.

Other moments related to attempts at separation were constructed through representations and alternating games. Such games present a constitutive function, since they give the child the possibility of leaving the position of object of maternal desire and assuming the position of subject (confronting his/her own desire). Most of the play in the interactions between S3 child in interaction with the mother and father was developed with the father, mother and son dolls in a game of hide-and-seek. The father and mother found the son, the son found the father, but the mother remained hidden and was never found (in fact, the end of the game in the interaction with the triad ends with the mother remaining hidden).

The game of “preparing food” was also representative of this alternating game. In her daily life, the mother needs to give up her illusion of completeness and face her lack, so that the child discovers that he is different from her<sup>16</sup>. The act of feeding is the possibility of filling this lack in relation to the mother, but also the possibility of the place of desire of the child in the refusal of food.

In this sense, it is possible to notice on the part of S2 and S3 children, a marked search for differentiation characterized precisely by the “no”, the refusal to prepare food for the mother (in the case of S2 child) and the refusal to accept the food offered by the mother (in the case of S3 child) in “preparing food” games. S2 is faced with his incessant requests of the mother for him to feed her: – I wanted some food, some food that Mateus (not his real name) would make for mom! Huh Matthew? Some food for the mother to eat on... on the stove. Huh? The child does not respond and pretends not to hear. The child continues playing and, upon yet another request from the mother, the child makes mud soup, which for the “taste” of the mother it is not good, and then a carrot soup, which she really likes. As for S3 child, while the mother is playing cooking, she says to the child: – Do you know what your mother made for you... It’s a lie (pauses for a long time) and for your father? Strogonoff! The child responds: – Ew! It is a lie, lie, I loved it! In this sense, the situations seem to demonstrate the effort of these children to separate themselves from the desire of the mother and maintain themselves as a subject, as not refusing what the mother offers could trap them in alienation.

The alternation of presences and absences, hiding and appearing, not satisfying and satisfying, places the mother in a missing position, and the child in a position of one that no longer retains the mother. The

paternal function also acts in this operation, which, by introducing otherness, demarcates the mother-child bond. Together with this function, there is the introduction of interdiction, implying the renunciation by the child of some satisfactions and, thus, the recognition of difference and the constitution of a subject separate from the mother<sup>16</sup>.

Regarding the paternal function in the subjects of this study, it seems that the problem lies in the question of the paternal metaphor and the role of the real father, and therefore, in the passage from the second to the third time of the Oedipus complex. However, it is necessary first of all to situate the developments proposed by Lacan in relation to the times of the Oedipus complex in which the paternal function intervenes.

Oedipus occurs in three stages<sup>17</sup>. The first stage is characterized as a dual relationship between mother and child, the problem that arises for the child is that of being able to take the place of the object of desire of the mother. The second is characterized by the insertion of the father in the relationship and the advent of the symbolic (this is the moment when the child begins to speak). The father intervenes as a depriving agent, interdicting the mother. It is through words, while saying no, that he supports the Law. However, this needs to be mediated by the mother who carries the word of the father<sup>18</sup>. The third stage, according to Lacan, is marked by the identification of the child with the father, as he is a “potent” carrier who can satisfy the mother. It is then, in the third stage, that the real father is introduced, the one who becomes “potent” and satisfies the mother.

In family interactions there was an important point of impasse in relation to the paternal role. This, faced with the tyranny of maternal desire, does not effectively intervene to promote the Law. For the paternal function to be effective, it is necessary for the mother to recognize the word of the father and create a place for him to exercise his function and promote himself as Law<sup>6</sup>. However, what occurred in some scenes was that the word of the father was not supported by the mother, but in addition, there was also a passivity arising from the paternal role in the face of maternal demands. This leads us to think of a certain lack of the real father.

In this sense, it refers to a scene of interaction between S1 child and parents. The child makes all the characters sit down to listen to a story that he/she himself/herself would tell. The father and mother stop playing to listen to the story. The child looks at the father and orders: – Go! Make dinner! The father answers:

– I'm doing it! (and resumes the game of preparing dinner). – Then go! said the child. The mother smiles. Soon after, the child begins to tell the story: – Snow White. Snow White, she saw her grandmother very sad (at this point she laughs) and then, the grandmother, she had big teeth that was the big bad wolf (at this point the father and daughter look at each other and smile). – Is that the father? The child asks the father. He answers laughing: – No, it's not! And goes back to "cooking". The child continues telling the story, looking at his father – So, so, so, so the big bad wolf was really fat (father and daughter look at each other and smile), so, so he had some teeth, so... At that moment the child stops telling the story and says: – Dad, Dad, you're on the wrong stove! (the mother starts to laugh). Very irritated, the child takes the stove from his father and says: – It's turned upside down, man! (the mother laughs a lot). That is how the stove is! (the child adjusts the position of the stove). Misunderstanding everything! Faced with this situation, the father listens to the child and simply says: Okay, okay! Okay! That is the end of the story! The child continues "reprimanding" his father. Looking at the pots on the stove, he/she says: – Two together! Why two together? The father takes one of the pots off the stove, the child gets irritated, looks at his mother as a way of approving of his attitude towards his father, to which the mother responds with a disapproving look at her husband. The child continues telling his story. The father says: – It's ready now! The child ignores the words of his/her father and continues: – That's the end of the story. The mother says: – Then let's have dinner, dinner is ready. The child says: – Okay, I understand, that's the end of the story, and they went happily to... The father offers a pan of food for the child to eat and the child looks at his father angrily and says: – Set the table, man! (staring at his father who looks away from the child).

Now, it is worth noting the calling of the wolf in the story of the child. The wolf appears here as a disguise for the father, as a replacement for the maternal devouring that is hopeless and non-negotiable by "bite of the father," which can be negotiable. In this sense, it seems that it is in relation to the danger of being swallowed and taken over by the desire of the mother that the story with the wolf comes to bring a possibility of metaphorical substitution.

In another part of a scene between the triad - father, mother and S2 child - the mother insisting that she wants food prepared by the child and states that the child does not know where the stove is. At that

moment, the father laughs and says: – Me neither! The mother then says: – Yes, but you don't know, look! You two don't even know what a refrigerator is! (father just laughs). The fun continues. The father points to a piece of furniture and asks if it is a wardrobe. The mother picks up the furniture, looks at it and says: – Dad... look Matthew, dad isn't looking properly! You saw it! Tell dad what this is all about. (Dad remains passive and just laughs). The child answers: – ahunm a wardrobe. The mother makes a contemptuous face and the child says: – no, I don't know! The mother then says: – Huh? What could this be here? It doesn't look like a wardrobe! What do you think it is? Don't take your glasses off! The child answers: – It's a weapon, but it's a closet. The mother replies that it is not a closet and asks again what it is. The child responds that it is a wardrobe. The mother says it is neither a closet nor a wardrobe.

In an interaction scene between S3 child and his/her parents, the child takes the doll that represents his son and says that he is sleepy and wants to sleep. Then take the doll and put it on the bed. The mother, with the doll that represents her mother, says that she is also sleepy and will sleep with him. The child responds that it cannot be done because there is no more space on the bed. Even so, the mother puts the mother doll to sleep in bed with her son. At that moment, the father interferes and calls the child to play ball. Mom says that right after lunch you cannot play football. Then, the child takes the child doll and "jumps out of the house" inviting the father to go and play hide and seek. They start playing hide and seek and the mother says she will play together.

Such excerpts make clear the paternal passivity and the maternal "power". These mothers have become potentially capable of creating obstacles to the resolution of the alienation-separation process. They attribute to their children meanings that relate to themselves, to their own desires, and in many situations they disregard the desires of their children and the paternal function. The children, in turn, seem to identify with the meanings of the mother and organize themselves psychically according to their desires. In addition, although in some situations the paternal function tried in some way to prohibit and create an obstacle to the dual relationship between mother and child, his/her word was not enough to establish authority and prevent its passivity and connivance with the omnipotence of the maternal desire. So, the question that remains for this moment is: can this father, support of the Law, this interdicting father



suffice, sustain himself, mediated only by the discourse of the mother? Could it be that in order to operate as a paternal function and sustain this prohibition, there is no need to convey something of the desire of the one who supports it?

According to the ideas of Lacan, the maternal function provides the necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the paternal function to be prohibited and, “[...] in the best of cases, the mother willingly becomes the bearer of voice of such prohibition”<sup>19</sup>. However, if this is not enough to introduce the subject into the dimension of the Name-of-the-Father, one could believe that it is because it is appropriate to add to this dimension of interdiction precisely this third time, the time of the establishment of the “potent” father who can satisfy the mother, the real father. In this sense, to satisfy the mother, it is important that the real prohibition by the paternal function be made, above all, to the mother. The father would then be responsible for operating the function that establishes a barrier to maternal intrusions towards the child. It is only from this barrier that the experience of emptiness, of lack, could be experienced by the child, enabling him/her to be constituted as a subject differentiated from the mother and, then, desiring. However, how would a father who “is only good at sleeping” (F1) and who “just watches” who “doesn’t want to do anything” and who “climbs on top of the refrigerator” (F1) place himself under prohibition? How could he being “artful” and “funny” (P1) deprive the mother of keeping the child as an object of desire and capturing her desire?

This is precisely the topic that arises as an impasse in children who stutter. The paternal function in the children who participated in the study is weakened, and, therefore, it is difficult to stop the desire of the mother. Such fragility would so result in the invasion of the mother, placing obstacles in the separation operation. In a very illustrative way, it refers to a scene of playing football between the father and the S3 child, being the mother considered an obstacle. The father takes the doll that represents the father and starts kicking an object that was a ball in the game. In the middle of the “soccer field” were the dolls mother, grandmother, grandfather and girl (who represented the little sister that S3 wanted to have). The father doll kicks the ball and it bumps into the doll representing the mother. Then, the child says: – I’ll take it out of here and the girl works (removes all the dolls, mother, grandmother, grandfather and the girl stays). The father replies: – But they are obstacles, never mind! The child

agrees and puts the mother, grandmother and grandfather dolls back.

Then, it seems that these children are themselves responsible for the establishment of lack, of emptiness, when they bring up symptomatic speech. It is in the symptom that they open a vacuum so that they can insert themselves as a subject into what allows them to desire and, therefore, what allows them to be. There is a choice of subject that needs to be made, and that seems to have been made by these children.

The interdisciplinarity between Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences and Psychoanalysis in Brazil started in the 1990s. An integrative literature review tried to verify the studies published between 2010 and 2020 on this interdisciplinarity, both in national and international literature. The objective of this study was to find research that addressed issues related to the field of speech and language, integrating both areas. After selecting and reviewing the studies, 10 relevant papers were identified. The results indicated a prevalence of publications in journals in the area of language in interface with Psychoanalysis, highlighting the importance of Psychoanalysis in listening to symptoms and speech-language disorders. These disorders do not manifest themselves in isolation, being directly influenced or caused by psychological issues of the subject. Regarding the performance of Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences in interface with Psychoanalysis, the studies highlighted that listening and psychoanalytic formulations serve as a subsidy for speech-language practice. The years 2012 and 2019 stood out for the increase in the number of publications in this area<sup>20</sup>.

It is important to highlight the scarcity of current scientific studies that address the influence of parental speech on speech symptoms of children through a psychoanalytic perspective. Psychoanalysis offers a deep understanding of family dynamics and parental interactions and has a significant impact on emotional and cognitive development of children, which includes speech. Therefore, it is believed that research in this area is necessary in order to provide a more solid basis for more effective interventions and promote healthier and more holistic child development.

## CONCLUSION

Although the child is considered to be active in the process of constitution and in the formation of his/her symptoms, it is the family dynamics that make a decisive element in the construction of his/her

symptoms, so that, many times, he/she becomes the depository and spokesperson of the family symptoms. In this sense, thinking about stuttering from the psychoanalytic precepts is to comprehend it as a symptom that needs to be articulated to the field of the Other and the paternal function and therefore it is not something that should be eliminated for the good of the subject, but a functioning that needs to be listened to.

Considering this perspective for this research, by listening to the symptoms of the children and the place they occupied in the parental desire, paths were opened to understand the implications in the symptomatic speech of the children, arising from both the maternal desire and the paternal discourse. It was possible to perceive, in the cases studied, the repetition of a certain “functioning” of the parental functions: the bond established between the mother and child was marked by a mutual dependence and a difficulty that caused impasses in the separation. In addition, the paternal function, so necessary for separation, was also problematized (although not absent).

It was verified that, given this family functioning, the children used a language symptom - stuttering - as a way to seek separation from the maternal demand.

In this sense, Psychoanalysis becomes collaborative with Speech, Hearing and Language Sciences, as it highlights the importance of the speech therapist listening to the parental discourse and the change in the position as a language therapist, in the sense of focusing on listening to the child who stutters (subject) and not to the stutterer (symptom). Another important point regarding interdisciplinary work is the possibility of strengthening the treatment and bringing benefits to the patient. However, there are limitations in this research, such as the small number of subjects, which may affect the generalization of results, as well as the need for more studies on the subject, stuttering and psychoanalysis, as it was difficult to find current research to compare with this work.

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**Author's contributions:**

TC: Conceptualization; Data curation; Data analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Writing - Original draft.

GMB: Writing - Review & editing.

CLM: Supervision; Writing - Review & editing.

**Data sharing statement:**

The individual data of participants that were collected during the interviews for the research and that are included in this paper may be shared with anyone who wishes to have access and for any purpose. The published paper does not contain any other document other than the text itself. Regarding the terms of consent of the participants, these will be preserved for five years after the research is carried out. The data shared will all refer to the interviews with the parents and children at the time of collection; however, there is no identification of the participants in the paper. This data will be available from the publication of the paper and there is no deadline for access.