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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **A Culturally Responsive Narrative Retell Approach for Stuttering in the RSK Region**

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**| ABSTRACT**

The present study investigates a tailored narrative retelling approach adapted for individuals experiencing stuttering in the RSK region, with a particular emphasis on addressing cultural responsiveness at the level of assessment tools. Initial findings emphasize the need for assessment tools that are both culturally and linguistically attuned. Positive participant reactions to culturally responsive interventions highlight their effectiveness. Proficient responses affirm the positive impact of cultural and linguistic adaptation, while participants are categorized as Emerging and Minimal points to specific areas requiring intervention. The retelling task and thematic analysis of interview questions offer a comprehensive framework, revealing the demand for more refined assessment tools. This research provides valuable insights for developing inclusive interventions in diverse cultural contexts, laying a foundation for future research and advancements in the RSK region.

**| KEYWORDS**

Stuttering, RSK, Narrative retelling, Culturally Responsive, Retelling Story Task

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### **1. Introduction**

Narrative and story retelling assess an individual's ability to create coherent narratives. It provides valuable insights into their narrative construction skills. As a research tool, narrative elicitation is employed to explore individuals' ability to construct narratives in various contexts. It serves as a qualitative approach to understanding personal storytelling. On the research front, story retelling becomes an analytical approach. It helps researchers understand how individuals process and convey narratives, particularly in linguistic and psychological studies. These processes, while distinct, complement each other in fostering expressive communication and understanding individuals' narrative abilities (Kendall & Kendall, 2012).

Narrative retelling through a story is a method employed in language assessment, particularly within Speech-Language Pathology (SLP). This approach involves prompting individuals, often children, to recount a story they have previously heard or read. The storyteller is tasked with recalling and expressing the narrative's events, characters, and details in their own words. This process allows SLPs to evaluate various linguistic and cognitive elements, including vocabulary usage, sentence structure, organizational skills, and overall narrative competence. The latter is a valuable tool to assess an individual's ability to comprehend, process, and convey information cohesively, providing insights into their language development and communication skills. Correspondingly, narrative language holds significance in the linguistic development of young children. It involves the oral presentation of causally related events or experiences in temporal order, commonly referred to as narration or storytelling (Hughes et al., 1997; Peterson, 1990).

However, assessing narrative production, primarily through incorporating culturally responsive imagery, requires exploration in the Moroccan context. The collection of audio recordings and close-up interaction with participants stands out because it emphasizes the intricate psychological dimensions of human expression, focusing on voice nuances and the significance of silences within

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discourse. Thus, the current research involves the administration of a story-retelling task to children who stutter (CWS) to document the significance of a culturally responsive form of elicitation. As the exploration initiated, a pilot study was undertaken as part of a doctoral research project, utilizing semi-structured interview questions administered to a diverse sample of STs across the RSK<sup>1</sup> region. The primary objective is to document the responses to narrative retelling among CWS. Thus, the current study serves as a crucial step toward understanding the nuanced landscape of narrative and story retelling in the context of speech therapy across the RSK region, focusing on culturally responsive practices and the experiences of individuals who stutter.

## **2. Literature Review**

Narrative language holds significant importance in the linguistic development of young children. To qualify as a narrative assessment, Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) delve into prompted or unprompted story recounts, detailing events beyond typical conversational exchanges or brief responses to posed questions. Apart from their natural occurrence, personal narratives serve as sensitive indicators of narrative competence, contributing to literacy acquisition (Bliss & McCabe, 2012). The rhythmic flow of personal narratives prompts expansion beyond personal experiences (Hughes, 2001), offering insight into the child's linguistic organization. Further, narrative analyses become instrumental in distinguishing children with language impairment from their typically developing peers; the multifaceted exploration underscores the rich dimensions inherent in narrative assessment within Speech-Language Pathology.

Stuttering, a complex speech disorder, has been the subject of extensive research to understand its various dimensions. One area that has gained prominence is the investigation of narratives in individuals who stutter (CWS) compared to those with typically developing communication skills (e.g., Scott, Healey, & Norris, 1995; Weiss & Zebrowski, 1994). In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a child's language development, it is essential to examine two levels: macrostructure and microstructure. The macrostructure pertains to the overall structure of a narrative, encompassing its global organization and presentation. A standard method for assessing the macrostructure level is through using Story Grammar (SG), a concept introduced by Stein and Glenn (1979). SG offers a universally applicable organizational framework for analysing narrative elements such as setting, characters, and episodic structure.

On the other hand, the microstructure focuses on the linguistic components employed in narrative expression, highlighting the narrator's proficiency in fundamental language structures. The latter includes lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic features (Petersen et al., 2010). The latter dimensions of analysis have been directly or indirectly considered in the following studies. Trautman et al. (1999) explored differences between CWS and CNC in narrative complexity, cohesion use, and stuttering frequency across Story Retelling and Story Generation tasks. The study involved eight CWS and eight CNC peers. Results revealed no significant disparities in narrative complexity or cohesion use, indicating that CWS exhibited narrative abilities similar to CNC's. Correspondingly, stuttering frequency showed significant differences, suggesting task-dependent variations. Story retelling produced longer and more elaborate narratives, emphasizing the importance of task selection in understanding stuttering in a narrative context. The study concluded by highlighting the need for future research directions. On a similar note, Scott, Healey, and Norris (1995) conducted a study involving six CWS and six fluent children, examining their narrative skills under two conditions: story retelling and story generation. The analysis focused on various language measures, including t-units, attempted story grammar episodes, and grammatical cohesion indices (conjunctions and pronoun references). Despite no significant group differences observed in the language measures, the stuttering group exhibited significantly greater stuttering counts during the story-retelling condition than the fluent group. Overall, the latter studies add to understanding how stuttering manifests in narrative contexts, specifically highlighting increased stuttering occurrences during specific narrative tasks.

The studies underscore the importance of evaluating both macrostructure and microstructure dimensions in understanding language development, providing insights into the manifestation of stuttering in narrative contexts. Analyzing stuttering occurrences during specific narrative tasks, such as story retelling, contributes to a comprehensive comprehension of how stuttering impacts linguistic and narrative proficiency. In this way, these studies serve as valuable contributions to the broader exploration of language development and the impact of speech disorders, emphasizing the need for future research in this multifaceted domain.

Similarly, Nippold et al. (1991) extended the exploration of narratives by investigating story length, syntactic complexity, story grammar components, and story comprehension in children who stutter. The study included 10 CWS and 10 CNC, revealing no statistically significant group differences across measured variables. While the study did not find disparities, it underscored the importance of considering various narrative elements in stuttering research. Weiss and Zebrowski (1994) conducted a subsequent investigation, comparing the story-retelling abilities of eight CWS with eight fluent peers under different conditions. Despite a

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<sup>1</sup> RSK: a regional abbreviation. It stands for Rabat, Sale, and Kenitra in Morocco.

thorough analysis of narrative transcripts focusing on story grammar, c-units, and maze behaviour, no statistically significant group differences emerged. This study emphasized the need for a nuanced examination of narrative features to comprehend the intricacies of stuttering. However, qualitative distinctions were identified between the groups concerning the length and detail present in the narratives. The stuttering group produced stories that were comparatively shorter and less detailed than those of their fluent peers when retelling them. The authors proposed that these qualitative differences could indicate variations in the pragmatic abilities of the two groups.

Quantitative measures may not always reveal significant differences. However, qualitative distinctions, as observed in the length and detail of narratives, provide valuable insights into the pragmatic abilities of individuals who stutter. Collectively, these studies contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between stuttering and narrative skills, emphasizing the need for further research in this evolving field.

In conclusion, narrative retelling emerges as a potent tool, providing profound insights into a child's verbal expression while addressing a spectrum of language features and organizational abilities. This method goes beyond the oral realm, bridging the critical gap between spoken and written language, thereby playing a pivotal role in developing essential reading and writing skills (Snow et al., 1998). As emphasized by Hoffman (2009), McCabe and Bliss (2003), and Ukrainetz (2006), narrative retelling offers a nuanced understanding of a child's verbal expression, highlighting its multifaceted nature. Consequently, it becomes imperative to recognize the importance of developing research and assessment tools that are culturally and linguistically adapted. Thus, adaptation is essential for delving into the intricate world of narratives in stuttering research, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate exploration of this critical aspect.

### 3. Methodology

A convenience sampling method was employed, leveraging our sustained physical presence throughout the entire data collection period for the doctoral research project. This approach facilitated engagement with STs with diverse experiences and various age groups. The intention was to understand prevailing practices among clinicians concerning narrative assessments and their use of culturally responsive tools. It is noteworthy that, despite the significance of narrative re-telling, more research needs to be conducted on the impact of these techniques on stuttering as a speech disorder. Through this study, we seek to contribute to the discourse on the cultural responsiveness of PWS to culturally adapted speech assessments through the use of narrative re-production and identify potential areas for improvement or refinement in clinical practices.

#### 3.1. Research Design

Utilizing a qualitative approach, the present study employs a research design that delves into the nuanced aspects of narrative retelling among speech therapists and stuttering patients.

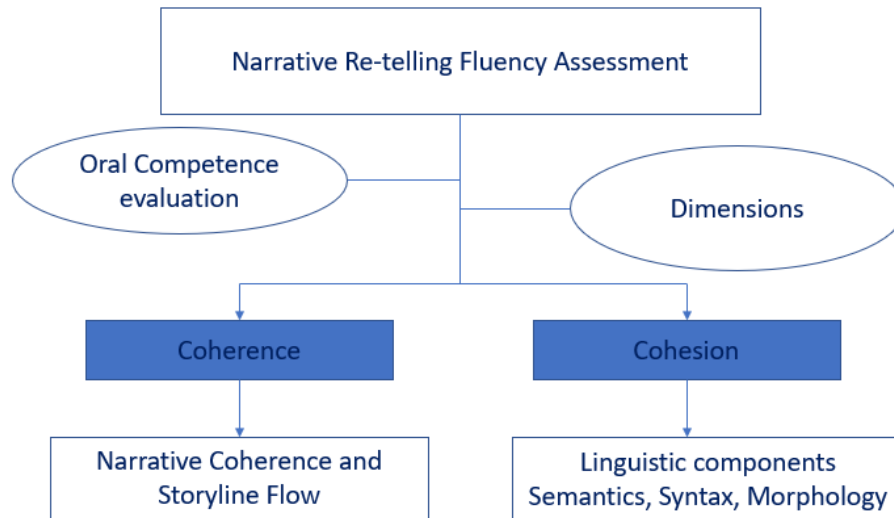
#### 3.2. Participants

- **Speech Therapists:** Using a convenient sampling method, we have recruited 11 speech therapists from the (RSK) region.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Seven speech therapists who responded to the questions were chosen for semi-structured interviews.
- **Participants:** The study included five stuttering patients aged 8 to 10.
- **Story Retell Task:** Patients engaged in a culturally responsive story retell task titled "Alice and the Suitcase," developed by Westerveld, M. F. (2017). The task was adapted and translated into Moroccan Arabic for cultural responsiveness.

#### 3.3. Data Collection

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews are conducted with the selected speech therapists to gather insights into their methods of narrative assessments. Questions focus on the therapists' approaches, tools used, and considerations for cultural responsiveness.
- **Story Retell Task:** Patients were individually given the adapted "Alice and the Suitcase" task. Observations are made on their narrative production (see Figure 1) and, most importantly, their engagement with the culturally adapted task. The subsequent model (see Figure 1), formulated as a component of this study, is considered during the analysis of the produced data.

**Figure 1:** Narrative re-telling Fluency Assessment



*Note: The figure illustrates the components that have been taken into consideration for subject fluency assessment*

### **3.3.1. Procedure**

#### **3.3.1.1. Semi-structured interviews**

- *Participant Selection:* A convenient sampling method is employed to select speech therapists from the (RSK) region.
- *Interview Process:* Individual interviews are conducted with each therapist using a semi-structured format. This approach allows for a flexible exploration of therapists' practices in narrative elicitation. Thematic analysis of the obtained responses is carried out using MAXQDA 2022. The questions primarily centre around methodologies, tools, and considerations for cultural responsiveness. Here are some of the critical questions posed:
  - Do you use standardized tests, informal assessments, or both in your practice for assessing stuttering patients?
  - In your experience, how do you incorporate culturally responsive imagery into your narrative elicitation techniques?
  - What assessment tools or methods are most effective for evaluating narrative production in individuals who stutter?
  - In what ways do you consider cultural factors when employing narrative elicitation techniques?
  - Have you encountered any challenges or successes in adapting narrative elicitation for the cultural context of the (RSK) region?
  - How do you document and record the findings from narrative assessments? Are there specific tools or systems you use?

#### **3.3.1.2. Story re-tell task**

Narrative analysis is employed to examine the patients' retellings. Cultural responsiveness is a key focus area.

##### **3.3.1.2.1. Cultural Adaptation**

- *Translation:* The "Alice and the Suitcase" task is translated into Moroccan Arabic to ensure linguistic and cultural responsiveness. The story has been developed by Westerveld, M. F. (2017). Alice and the Suitcase [online version]. Australia: Author.
- *Adaptation:* Cultural and linguistic adaptations are made to align with Moroccan participants' backgrounds.
- *Materials used:* laptop, voice recorder, checklist document.
- *Procedure:* Upon obtaining informed consent from the legal guardians of the participants for their inclusion in the research, individual subjects were situated in a tranquil environment under the oversight of a Speech-Language Therapist.

The researcher then provided each participant with instructions to initiate the assigned task. Subsequently, participants were prompted to watch the "Alice and the Suitcase narrative," which had been translated and adapted to the patient's target language and dialect. Concurrently, audio recordings of the participants' vocalizations were captured during this process. The procedure for this task involved presenting the story, immediately followed by administering comprehension questions. Subsequently, children were instructed to listen to the story once more and retell the narrative without visual support.

### 3.4. Qualitative Data Analysis

- Thematic analysis is employed for the semi-structured interview data to identify recurring themes and patterns in therapists' practices through the MAXQDA 2022.
- Transcripts analysis is used to examine the story retell task data, focusing on cultural relevance and patients' interaction with a linguistically and culturally adapted task.

### 3.6. Ethical Considerations

- Informed Consent: Informed consent is obtained from speech therapists and the guardians of the participants.
- Confidentiality: Participants' identities are kept confidential to ensure privacy and ethical standards.

### 3.7. Limitations

The limited sample size may introduce participant selection biases, affecting the findings' generalisability. The study recognizes the need for caution in drawing broad conclusions from a smaller participant pool, as these biases could impact the accuracy of the findings.

The focus on a specific age group (6 to 8 years) may introduce internal validity challenges due to potential developmental and experiential differences within the age cohort. Variability in stuttering experiences across different age groups could affect the generalizability of the study's conclusions to a broader population of practitioners and CWS.

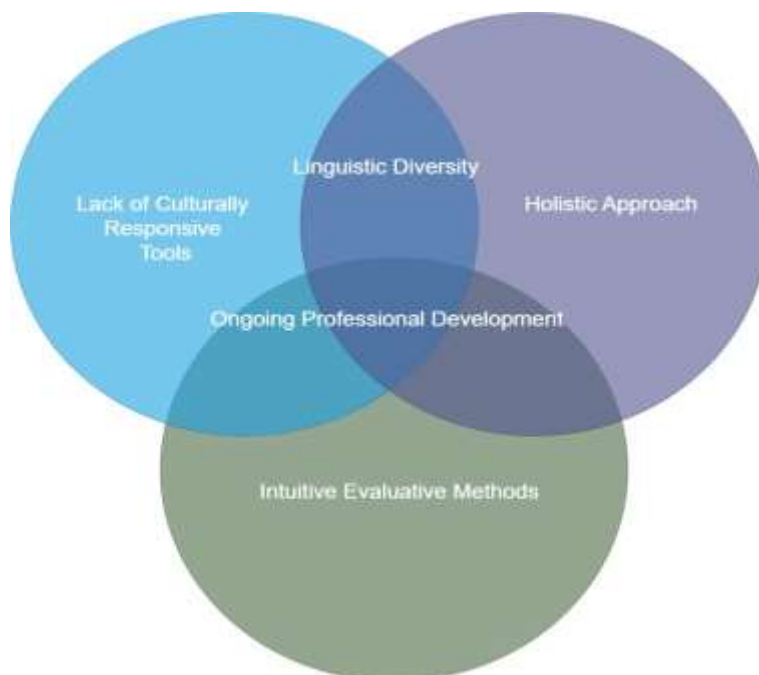
### 3.8. Significance:

The study aims to contribute insights into the practices of speech therapists in the (RSK) region regarding narrative re-telling. Additionally, it explores the cultural responsiveness of the adapted story-retelling task, providing valuable information for future interventions and research in stuttering therapy.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Semi-structured interviews results

**Figure 2: Thematic Analysis Framework**



#### **4.1.1. Themes analysis**

The key themes related to assessments and evaluations present a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities in understanding and addressing the needs of individuals experiencing stuttering in the RSK region. Let us delve into each theme:

1. *Holistic Approach*: The emphasis on a holistic approach signifies recognizing the multifaceted nature of stuttering experiences. This theme suggests moving away from isolated assessments and towards a more integrated understanding of individuals' speech fluency within their broader contexts. Adopting a holistic perspective can enhance the effectiveness of interventions by considering the interplay of cultural, social, and personal factors.
2. *Lack of Culturally Responsive Tools*: Acknowledging a lack of culturally responsive tools underscores a critical gap in assessment resources. Culturally responsive tools are essential to accurately capture the diverse experiences and expressions of stuttering within the cultural and linguistic context of the RSK region. Bridging this gap is crucial for developing interventions that resonate with the unique needs of individuals in this specific cultural setting.
3. *Intuitive Evaluative Methods*: The reliance on intuitive evaluative methods suggests a potential gap in standardized evaluation processes. While intuitive methods may offer valuable insights, incorporating more systematic and evidence-based evaluative approaches is essential. This theme emphasizes the importance of grounding assessments in established frameworks to ensure consistency and reliability in understanding stuttering experiences.
4. *Continuous Updated Training*: Recognizing the need for continuously updated training highlights the dynamic nature of the field. Ongoing professional development is crucial for practitioners to stay informed about the latest research, interventions, and culturally responsive practices. This theme emphasizes the importance of investing in training programs that keep professionals abreast of advancements in understanding and managing stuttering.
5. *Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (Northern accent, Tamazight)*: Cultural and linguistic diversity points to the significance of recognizing linguistic variations in the assessment process, such as the Northern accent and Tamazight. This theme underscores the importance of tailoring assessments to accommodate linguistic diversity, ensuring that evaluation tools are sensitive to the diverse linguistic backgrounds within the RSK region.

Notably, the holistic approach theme suggests recognizing the value of the multifaceted nature of the disorder. The latter could be an acknowledgment that not all assessments need to be rigid and formal, allowing for more flexibility in gauging understanding of the manifested dysfluency. In addition, as highlighted by one of the STs, informality in sessions played the role of an icebreaker between the patient and the clinician, putting the patient at ease. Hence, the elicitation of various responses is attained. Therefore, formality and informality in evaluation emphasize a complete, interconnected view rather than an isolated one.

Acknowledging the absence of culturally responsive tools sheds light on a critical gap in assessment resources. This theme highlights the need for tools that accurately reflect the diverse expressions of stuttering within the cultural and linguistic nuances of the RSK region. Bridging this gap becomes imperative to develop interventions that align with the unique cultural context and linguistic diversity, ensuring assessments resonate with individuals' experiences.

Further, reliance on intuitive evaluative methods signals a potential gap in standardized evaluation processes. While intuitive methods offer valuable insights, incorporating systematic and evidence-based approaches is essential. This theme emphasizes grounding assessments based on research to enhance the reliability of tools. The latter will further broaden understanding of stuttering experiences, ensuring a more rigorous and comprehensive evaluation.

Moreover, recognizing the need for continuously updated training underscores the dynamic nature of the field. Ongoing professional development becomes crucial for practitioners to stay abreast of the latest research, interventions, and culturally responsive practices. This theme emphasizes the importance of investing in training programs that empower professionals with the knowledge and skills to navigate advancements in understanding and managing stuttering.

On a cultural and linguistic note, this theme highlights the importance of acknowledging linguistic variations, such as the Northern accent and Tamazight, in the assessment process. Hence, assessments should be tailored to accommodate linguistic diversity by ensuring that evaluation tools are adapted to the varied linguistic backgrounds within the RSK region. By recognizing and addressing these linguistic nuances, assessments can capture a more accurate picture of individuals' stuttering experiences in this diverse cultural setting.

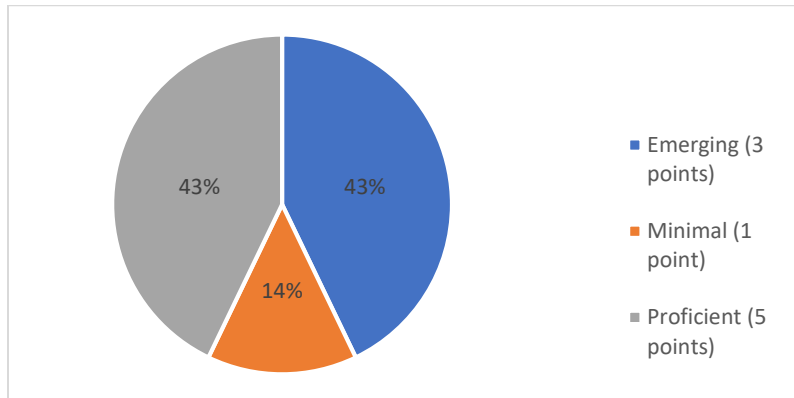
Collectively, the key themes that emerged highlight the need for a more nuanced, culturally responsive approach to assessments in the context of stuttering within the RSK region. Addressing these themes can significantly contribute to developing more effective interventions that resonate with the cultural and linguistic diversity of individuals experiencing stuttering in this specific geographical and cultural context.

#### 4.2. Story re-tell task

In this study, young participants were directed to engage with a culturally adapted narrative titled "Alice and the Suitcase," crafted by Dr. Westerveld and her team (Westerveld et al., 2021). The participants, children in this instance, were asked to both listen to the narrated story and simultaneously view corresponding images displayed on a computer screen. Following their initial exposure to the narrative, the children were presented with comprehension questions to assess their understanding.

To ensure consistency in task execution, the procedural guidelines for this activity, developed by Dr. Westerveld, have been made accessible online. Additionally, the comprehension questions were translated into the target language and adjusted to align with the specific cultural and contextual aspects relevant to the participants involved in the research.

**Table 2:** Story re-tell Comprehension Assessment of Response Quality Across 11 Questions with Post-Question Assessment



*Note: The provided pie chart represents the distribution of task scores based on a culturally responsive narrative elicitation study for individuals experiencing stuttering in the RSK region. The task scores are categorized into three levels: Emerging (3 points), Minimal (1 point), and Proficient (5 points).*

Let us analyze the implications of this distribution.

##### Emerging (3 points):

- There were three instances where participants scored in the emerging category. The latter suggests that a notable proportion of participants exhibited moderate proficiency in responding to the assigned tasks.
- The Emerging category indicates a baseline competence, signifying that individuals are beginning to navigate the challenges presented by the narrative retelling process.

##### Minimal (1 point):

- One participant scored in the Minimal category.
- This outcome indicates that a segment of the participants faced challenges in achieving a higher level of proficiency in responding to the narrative prompts.
- The Minimal category suggests additional support or tailored interventions to enhance performance.

##### Proficient (5 points):

- As it is observed in the results of 3 instances where participants scored in the proficient category, the results are positive, suggesting that a subset of participants demonstrated a high level of comprehension and responsiveness to the task.
- The Proficient category indicates effective engagement in narrative retelling.

#### 4.2.1. Overall Implications

The distribution across the three task score categories reflects a diversity of responses among individuals experiencing stuttering in the RSK region.

Identifying participants in the proficient category is seen as positive and encouraging. The latter suggests that specific individuals could effectively navigate the cultural adaptation of the task and successfully retell the story in a manner that resonated with their cultural understanding.

However, participants in the minimal category point to potential areas for intervention. It highlights the need for further refinement of culturally responsive prompts to better cater to the needs of a broader range of participants. The latter recognition indicates a commitment to addressing areas requiring additional support or modification.

The high number of participants in the Proficient category suggests that the cultural and linguistic adaptation employed in the study has shown effectiveness. The latter outcome underscores the success of tailoring prompts to the diverse cultural backgrounds within the RSK region. Overall, the positive nature of the responses reinforces the significance of developing culturally and linguistically responsive assessment tools, thus emphasizing the importance of catering to national and regional needs and demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and relevance in the assessment process.

## **5. Conclusion**

In summary, this study has yielded significant insights into the efficacy of a culturally responsive narrative retelling approach tailored for individuals experiencing stuttering in the RSK region. The distribution of task scores across Emerging, Minimal, and Proficient categories underscores the diversity of responses within this specific cultural context.

The presence of participants in the Proficient category is an encouraging indicator of the successful adaptation of the task. The substantial number of proficient responses suggests that the cultural and linguistic adaptation implemented in the study has yielded positive outcomes. The carefully tailored prompts have effectively facilitated a nuanced and proficient expression of experiences from individuals grappling with stuttering in the RSK region. However, participants in the Emerging and Minimal categories signal potential areas for intervention and refinement.

Further, Insights gained from the identified themes in semi-structured interviews inform these areas, emphasizing the necessity for a more culturally responsive toolkit. The key themes provide a comprehensive framework for future development.

Addressing the gaps highlighted in the semi-structured interviews is vital for creating more refined and culturally sensitive tools. While the acknowledgment of the holistic approach is present, supplementing it with standardized and culturally responsive assessments is recommended. Moreover, placing heightened emphasis on acknowledging cultural and linguistic diversity, including the Northern accent and Tamazight, is paramount.

This study is a foundational step toward advancing interventions for individuals experiencing stuttering in the RSK region. The positive outcomes observed in the Proficient category affirm the effectiveness of cultural and linguistic adaptations. Simultaneously, the identified themes guide future research and development, paving the way for a more inclusive, practical, and culturally responsive approach to support individuals in diverse cultural contexts nationally.

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