

International Seminar on ‘Exigency in the Field of Speech-Language Pathology in India’ at IAS (07-09 May 2018)

Concept Note:

Speech-language pathology is the field that deals with the science of communication, its development and assessment and intervention of a range of communication disorders including speech, language, and cognition. Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) or speech and language therapist is the professional who specializes in the field of evaluation and treatment of communication disorders. The history of speech-language pathology in India dates back to 1962, with the establishment of speech and hearing clinics by two national medical institutions in Delhi and Bombay. For the first two decades, the focus in the field was towards the rehabilitation of hearing impaired, after, which the field started expanding gradually. Until the 1980s, only a few institutions were offering the bachelors and masters programs in the country, thereby producing only a handful graduates in the field. Owing to the lack of SLPs’ accessibility to the population at large with increasing public awareness and parental demand for services, Government of India passed the Rehabilitation Council of India Act in 1992. This led to the expanded scope of practice for SLPs in India and abroad, that led many non-government institutions to start offering the courses on speech and hearing. At present, while the overall public awareness regarding the field of speech-language pathology is on the rise, there are several challenges faced by the SLPs in the country.

The multilingual and multicultural nature of India brings an enormous challenge to the SLPs in terms of assessment and intervention of communication disorders. As the field of Speech-Language Pathology is based on spoken and written language (communication modalities), it is, therefore, highly resources dependent. The resources refer to the linguistic tests/tools available for assessment of communication disorders and the personnel or SLPs who speak the local languages. The number of languages spoken in India has compounded the shortage of available tools and test materials for assessment and diagnosis of communication disorders. Furthermore, the increasing number of bi/multilingual community in the country demands the need for the establishment of revised normative for the available tests/tools in various languages. Communication intervention too relies on the linguistic database for selecting appropriate intervention targets. However, unfortunately, there is an appalling lack of such linguistic databases and tools/tests in various languages in India. This lack of resources and database, therefore, places SLPs in a very disadvantageous position in the clinical and the research practice in India. In a recent survey conducted on SLPs aimed to investigate the issues SLPs face in the rehabilitation of people with aphasia in India, 30% of the SLPs reported lack of materials for the assessment and management of people with aphasia as one of the concerns (Tiwari & Krishnan, 2011).

Another challenge in the field of speech language pathology is its multidisciplinary nature. SLPs need to work in a team of professionals to address the needs of individuals with communication disorders. The team members often include audiologists, linguists, occupational therapists, special educators, clinical psychologists, physicians, and parents.

While the institutes offering courses in speech and hearing teach multi- and interdisciplinary approach to the assessment and intervention of communication disorders, they hardly practice or train student SLPs in this regard. Although over the years, clinical practice and training in speech-language pathology are gradually moving towards the multidisciplinary platform, the field lags prominently in terms of expected international standards. The multi/interdisciplinary approach is desirable to bring anticipated results in the rehabilitation of communication disorders and is time efficient. At the same time, it also requires cooperation and discussions among the team members involved.

Even after five decades of the existence of the field, the profession of speech-language pathology faces issues like lack of resources in a linguistically and culturally rich country like India. As stated by Karanth (2002) “It is regrettable that a discipline which is as heavily manpower-dependent as speech-language pathology has not expanded vigorously in a country whose major resource is its human resource.”

Thus, in the context of pressing the need for the development of the linguistic database in various languages and reestablishment of available norms for the several linguistic tools/test materials for the field of speech-language pathology, a seminar was proposed. In this regard, the three-day International Seminar on ‘*Exigency in the Field of Speech-Language Pathology in India*’ was an attempt provide a common platform to the linguists as well as speech language pathologists for dialogue between them. This seminar attempted to bring together professionals like SLPs, linguists, and academicians in India and invited speakers from abroad on a common platform in order to discuss the action plan to deal with the immediate need for the development of the linguistic database, assessment and intervention tools in Indian languages. The seminar also attempted to propose the formation of working committees to facilitate the clinical and research activities in the field of speech-language pathology. This seminar set the base for enormous work to be executed as a future collaborative work among the members of different disciplines towards strengthening of the clinical practice and research activities.

An International seminar on ‘*Exigency in the Field of Speech-Language Pathology in India*’ was organised at IAS during 07-09 May 2018. Dr. R. Lalitha Raja, Ex-Fellow, IAS and Dr. Shivani Tiwari, Associate Professor, Department of Speech and Hearing, School of Allied Health Sciences, Manipal University were the conveners of the seminar. The welcome address was given by Professor Kapil Kapoor, Chairman, Governing Body, IAS. Dr. R. Lalitha Raja, Convener of the seminar gave introductory remarks. The Keynote address was delivered by Professor Prathiba Karanth, Founder Director and Managing Trustee, The Communication DEALL Trust, Bangalore on ‘*The Interface between Speech Language Pathology and Linguistics in India- A Long Neglected Goldmine*’.

Participants:

- Professor Sunil Kumar Ravi, Associate Professor and Principal, Shravana Institute of Speech and Hearing, Cantonment, Ballari, Karnataka

- Professor L. Ramamoorthy, Head, Linguistic Data Consortium for Indian Languages(LDC-IL), Central Institute of Indian Languages, Manasagangotri, Mysuru
- Professor Gopee Krishnan, Department of Speech and Hearing, SOAHS, Manipal College of Allied Health Sciences, Manipal University, Manipal, Karnataka
- Professor Apoorva Pauranik, Neurophysician, Department of Neurology, MGM Medical College, Indore, Madhya Pradesh
- Professor Krishna Y., Professor and Head, Department of Speech & Hearing, School of Allied Health Sciences, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka
- Professor Ramesh Chand Sharma, Professor (Retd.), Zeus A-1/1104, Nyati Elan, Bakori Road, Wagholi, Pune
- Dr. C.S. Swathi, Assistant Professor, Department Of Linguistics, University College of Arts & Social Sciences, Osmania University, Hyderabad
- Professor Hakim Arif, Professor & Chairman, Department of Communication Disorders, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Ms. Bhavna Bajarh, Research Scholar, Department of English and Cultural, Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh
- Dr. Jaya Venkatagiri, BASLP Course Co-ordinator, Speech Pathologist and Audiologist, Madras Medical College, Chennai
- Mr. Shivam Dwivedi, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Linguistics, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
- Dr. Kala Dhanavendan, Assistant Professor, National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, East Coast Road, Muttukadu, Chennai, Tamilnadu
- Dr. Smitha K Nair, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, Thunchath Ezhuthanchan Malayalam University, Tirur, Kerala
- Ms. Sindhu. A. V.,Teacher trainer, Brc Agali, Palakkad, Kerala
- Ms. Adhirai Garibaldi, Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Speech Language and Hearing Sciences, Sri Ramchandra Medical College and Research Institute (DU), Chennai
- Ms. Maria Anju Pious, Research Officer, Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Studies, Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre and Research Institute (DU), Chennai

- Dr. Charisma Karthak Lepcha, Fellow, IAS
- Shri Ashutosh Bhardwaj, Fellow, IAS
- Professor Punnappurath Madhavan, Fellow, IAS.