

# **TRENDS IN SPEECH AND LANGUAGE REHABILITATION IN IRAN**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper is a short review on the form and content of speech and language rehabilitation services and the trend of their institutionalization in Iran. A summary of formal education in speech and language therapy in Iran as originated by establishing a 4 year BS rehabilitation program in the College of Rehabilitation Sciences in Tehran in 1974 is given . Since then , speech and language Rehabilitation programs have been expanding both in size and quality , resulting in about 1200 speech therapists practicing in hospitals and rehabilitation centers throughout the country . The expansion of the first BS program into 5 different graduate programs at MS level in different universities and a prospective Ph.D Program starting as of next year are also adding to the quality of these services . A summary of the content of the theory courses and clinical practice courses as well as research on assessment and diagnostic tools of specific speech and language impairments and cross - linguistic studies are briefly described .*

**Key words :** Speech and language Rehabilitation Therapy education / speech impairments

## **Nature and content of the programs**

Speech therapy education in Iran was first rendered at BS level as an independent rehabilitation program in the first department of speech therapy in the College of Rehabilitation Sciences along with other Rehabilitation programs such as Audiology , Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy within the context of Ministry of Higher Education in 1974 .

This 4 year Rehabilitation degree was offered to high school graduates who would pass the National University Entrance Examination and select speech therapy as their major . The program consisted of 140 unit courses in theory and practicum . The syllabus allocated 120 of the credits to theory courses and the rest to clinical practice .

The graduates of this program were certified to do clinical practice in speech and language disorders either in hospital clinics or private clinics under the supervision of ENT doctors .

During the past 29 years , speech and language therapy programs have been expanding in size from one BS degree program into three academic levels ( BS , MS and Ph.D ) and in number from one institution into five different institutions in different parts of the country . A summary of the history of the

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expansion of the programs is given in Table below .

semester in which the students are required to attend the clinic 4 hours weekly for each

#### Number and types of programs

Degree	Credits	Length	Year started	Institutions	total graduates
B.S.	140	4-5	1974	5	1200
M.S.	40	2-3	1990	3	80
Ph.D.	48	3-4	2004	2	-

The nature and content of the courses consists of basic science and behavioral sciences as well as courses related to speech and language impairments with either acquired or developmental origin. The basic courses include neurophysiology , neuroanatomy , psychology , psychiatry , linguistics , phonetics , psycholinguistics , child language development , physics , audiology , research and methodology . The speech and language impairment courses relate to assessment and therapy techniques of voice and articulation disorders , dysfluency , cleft palate , developmental language disorders , acquired aphasia ,dyslexia and dysgraphia .

Besides theory courses and practicum , a further requirement for the fulfillment of the degree is an independent two - unit project for BS and a six - unit thesis for postgraduate MS degree . At the BS level , the students are required to do an independent project on a selected topic on speech and language disorders and at the MS level a research Master's thesis while for Ph.D graduates a comprehensive dissertation is required .

#### Clinical Practicum

As mentioned , part of the syllabus at each level is allocated to clinical practice . Each clinical practice course is offered in the form of a unit course starting from the third

unit . At the BS level , the clinical courses are of 3 kinds : observed clinical sessions , supervised therapy and independent practice . The observed sessions are offered in one- way mirror rooms and the students are required to write up a structured report on each session. The supervised therapy session is initiated under the supervision of a staff member followed by a therapy plan by the student for each session . For every clinical course there is a final examination conducted by the supervisors at the end of the semester. The clinical practicum at the BS level is offered in 5 consecutive semesters dealing with a variety of speech and language disorders with different developmental and acquired etiologies . The MS and Ph.D . clinical practice courses are offered as Independent case studies on selected developmental as well as acquired speech and language disorders . The Students are required to write up a comprehensive report and give an oral presentation on at least one acquired and one developmental case study based on their proposed therapy plan conducted during the semester .

#### Licensing and Clinical Practice

Speech and language therapy services are offered both at hospital and university clinics

as well as in private clinics . Traditionally , clinical practice is offered under the staff or ENT doctors' supervision , especially in private clinics . As of last year , the Board of Rehabilitation Examination and Programs at the Ministry of Health and Medical Sciences in collaboration with the National Association of Speech Therapists has established criteria for independent private practice . Based on the new guidelines , each certified speech and language pathologist is required to obtain licensing permission for private practice .

### **Research and diagnostic tools**

The need for research in the field of speech and language rehabilitation in Iran , particularly where much of clinical practice is based on methods and assessment tools which have not been scientifically evaluated , is of paramount importance . In this regard , the staff members are encouraged to present research proposals in different areas of speech and language disorders, especially with emphasis on cross - linguistic studies for the purpose of revealing the symptomatological and etiological basis of each disorder . Post graduate students are also encouraged to gear their thesis topics to areas of research which would enable them to evaluate the existing therapy methods and / or develop new measuring tools and therapy methods dealing with a specific speech and language impairment observed during their clinical practice sessions .

Aphasiological research projects , on Persian monolingual aphasics in general and on bilingual population in particular have been expanding in the past 15 years resulting in developing one Persian standard test of aphasia based on the BDAE format for Persian : Farsi Aphasia Test ( Nilipour , 1992 ) , and an

international version of the Bilingual Aphasia Test ( the BAT , Paradis et . al, 1987 ) for Farsi and also Azari and Kurdish as two local languages in the multi - lingual society of Iran . The available standard aphasia tests are being used as measuring tools in the clinical practice for therapeutic as well as diagnostic and research purposes . They have also provided the base for standard case studies and scientific reports for cross - linguistic purposes at the international level . Part of these aphasiological studies on monolingual and bilingual aphasics as well as specific language impairments have been reported and published in collaborative books and in international journals such as *Brain and Language* , *Journal of Neurolinguistics and Aphasiology*.

Organizing workshops on special topics or conferences at the national level is also considered as another avenue for research and scientific collaboration amongst speech and language pathologists . The Seventh Iranian Congress on Speech Therapy is being held at Iran University of Medical Sciences in February 2004 .

### **Speech and Language Rehabilitation Services**

Clinical practice and Rehabilitation services on speech and language impairments undertaken by speech therapists in Iran has a wide range of therapeutic and Rehabilitation management . They cover both acquired as well as developmental impairments , child language disorders , hearing impairments , aphasia , voice disorders , articulation disorders, learning disorders , cleft palate and nasality , autism , stuttering and dyslexia and dysgraphia .

## **Research Department of Speech and Language Sciences**

Currently, Research Department of Speech & Language Sciences has been established at the University of Welfare & Rehabilitation Sciences in which new research projects are underway on major areas of speech and language sciences and impairments with emphasis on assessment methods for diagnostic, screening and therapeutic purposes.

These areas of research include:

- \* Assessment and diagnostic methods in Persian aphasiology and development of specialized language tests in acquired aphasia.
  - \* Etiology and symptomatology of developmental language impairments such as SLI and Dyslexia with emphasis on developing diagnostic screening tests and neuropsychological assessment procedures (Nilipour, 2003).
  - \* Symptomatology and etiology of developmental dyslexia in speakers of Persian with emphasis on screening methods and measuring tools (Shirazi & Nilipour, 2003).
  - \* A survey on features of natural voice in Persian speakers and vocal art medicine.
  - \* A Comparative survey on communicative self-beliefs of stutters and normal children.
  - \* A survey on expressive lexicon of Persian speaking children between 12 to 18 months.
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