WHAT IS SPECIFIC LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT?

Specific language impairment (SLI) is a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation of words, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance. People with speech and/or language impairment may present with communication problems including the following characteristics:

- **Articulation** - difficulties in making certain sounds which may be left off, added, changed, or distorted and makes it hard for people to understand and comprehend
- **Fluency** - the flow of speech is being disrupted with atypical rhythm, an abnormal number of repetitions and hesitations
- **Voice** - problems associated with abnormal pitch, loudness, vocal quality, resonance and loss of endurance
- **Language** - Impaired ability to comprehend and/or use of words in context, including difficulty in expressing ideas or needs, difficulties in understanding what others are saying or a mixture of both.

Some conditions that cause adult SLI:

**Speech-related:**
- Apraxia - a motor disorder caused by brain damage
- Dysarthria - a speech motor disorder resulted from impaired movement of muscles used for speech production
- stuttering - a speech disorder disrupted by involuntary repetitions and prolongations of sounds, syllables, words or phrases

**Language-related:**
- Aphasia - an inability to comprehend and formulate language due to brain damage

**Medical Conditions:**
- brain injury
- Huntington’s Disease - an inherited disease causing the progressive breakdown of nerve cells in the brain
- stroke
- oral cancer

DIVERSABILITY

The SEN & Diversability Team (DA) of the Counseling and Wellness Center is the primary contact with students who declare their SEN with the University. DA supports students from the very first step of the SEN declaration through completion of study at HKUST. DA officers meet with each declared student individually to map out a reasonable academic accommodation plan (aka IEP / Individualized Educational Plan) and to assess the needs for available resources and suitable support services.

SUPPORT SERVICES AT HKUST

Personalized and reasonable accommodations are arranged to each declared student based on the individual needs. Confidential data obtained from a student with SEN is used to enhance the coordination work with different parties for providing personal and support services. The data collected will be handled with strict security and confidentiality and in compliance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance of Hong Kong. The below lists out some of the possible accommodations to address the special needs of students with SLI:

- allow flexibility in oral components of testing without altering the course objectives
- allow extra time to express thoughts
- extended time for testing and/or assignments student not be pressured to read aloud and/or answer questions in front of classmates
- testing in a semi-private, quiet or separate place
The cause of SLI is sometimes clear, such as neurological impairment, intellectual impairment, hearing impairment or severe social deprivation impacting on language acquisition and development; whereas more often there is no identifiable cause. SLI is diagnosed by a speech and language therapist in conjunction with an educational psychologist.

Speech and language assessment highlights the areas of speech and language that are affected and determines the severity of the problem. A psychological assessment verifies that the child has good does not have an overall learning and intellectual disability or any other developmental problem.

A speech and language therapist helps a person with SLI to maximize his or her speech, language and communication potential to support learning and socialization, as well as give advice to family and school on supporting the person in enhancing communication ability in everyday life.

DARE is a group of enthusiastic students who want to empower the HKUST campus community to positively impact the support to students with SEN. The role of the ambassadors is to cultivate a campus where everyone’s diverse abilities are appreciated and where everyone feels accepted and nourished.

No matter how much you know about SEN, where you are from, and who you are, you can be a part of DARE if you want to contribute to campus inclusion!

(Special thanks to DARE for the great contribution to the production of this leaflet series!)

**ASSSESSMENTS AND THERAPEUTIC SUPPORTS**

**DIVERSABILITY, ADVOCACY, RESOURCES & EQUITY**

**CONTACT US**

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