



SCOPE OF PRACTICE FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPISTS

This paper is the first draft that will outline the current scope of practice of Speech-Language Therapists in Singapore. This paper will continue to be modified to reflect changes in general awareness, needs and demands of the nation.

TITLE

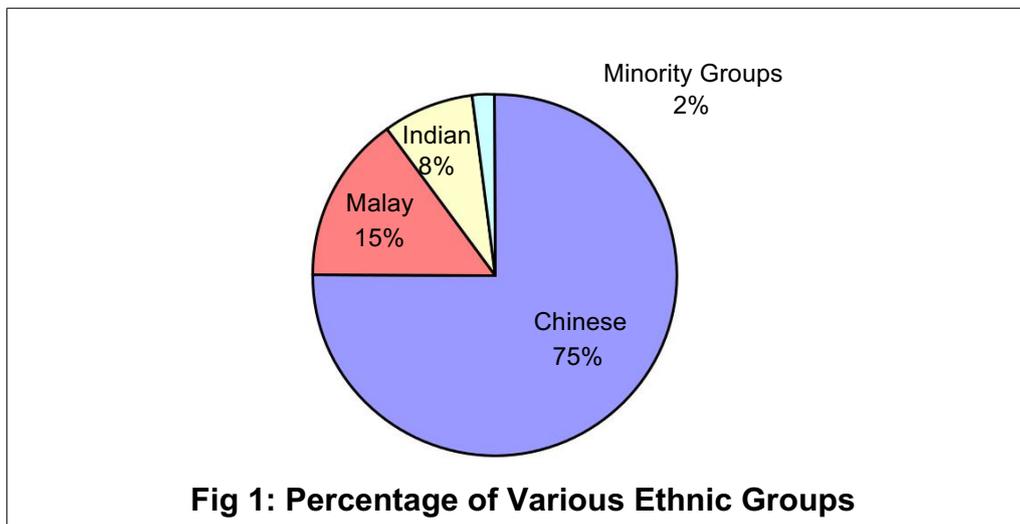
Currently the most commonly used title is **Speech-Language Therapist (SLT)**. Other titles that are in use locally and internationally include:

- Speech Therapist
- Speech Pathologist
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Logopaedist
- Communication Clinician/Therapist

By definition, a Speech-Language Therapist is a professional who works with individuals or groups of people who have speech and language disorders such as delayed language development, swallowing disorders, hearing impairment, and those requiring alternative/augmentative communication and more.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

As a young and vibrant nation with a multicultural population, Singapore is home to 4 million people from four major ethnic groups-Chinese, Malays, Indians and other minority groups such as Eurasians, Jews, Portuguese and more.





The major languages spoken here are English, Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and various Chinese dialects for example, Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese. According to Brebner (2001), local English can be found in 2 forms - Singapore Colloquial English (SCE), commonly known as "Singlish" and Singapore Standard English (SSE) which is similar to standard English elsewhere in the world. Major differences lie in syntax, phonology and prosody (Gupta 1994, Brebner 2001). Hence the linguistic and unique cultural backdrop forms a challenging and fertile learning ground for SLTs.

QUALIFICATIONS

To work as a speech therapist in Singapore you need to have a relevant degree from a recognised university. Currently there is no training course for SLT in Singapore, so both local and expatriate clinicians have trained overseas.

SETTINGS

The settings in which SLTs may be found can be classified as follows.

Acute Care Hospitals

Caseload: Stroke, geriatrics, head injury, respiratory medicine, head and neck cancer and ENT disorders.

Service Delivery: Inpatient, outpatient, group therapy

Skill Mix: Knowledge of communication and swallowing deficits, assessment and therapy, ability to work together with multi-disciplinary team

Other Skills: Instrumental evaluation such as videofluoroscopy, FEES, AAC assessment, consultation and education to other professionals

Rehabilitation Centres and Community Hospitals

As above but patients are typically deemed to have rehabilitation potential and length of stay varies between 4 – 8 weeks.

Nursing Homes

Similar caseload as above but with chronic problems and/or social problems. Role of SLT is as above with focus on maintenance of skills.



Special Schools

Caseload: Congenital syndromes, hearing impairment, learning disability

Service Delivery: Pull-out from classroom setting, classroom based therapy, one-to-one, small groups, home therapy

Skill Mix: Knowledge of disorders and aetiology, auditory training, swallowing disorders, AAC, oral myodysfunctional disorders

Other Skills: Skills and ability to work well with parents, children, professionals and provide training

Paediatric Hospitals

Caseload: Prematurity, speech-language delay, stuttering, voice disorders, swallowing disorders

Service Delivery: Inpatient, outpatient, group therapy

Skill Mix: Understanding of developmental milestones, neurology, post-graduate training in neonatal and paediatric swallowing disorders, AAC, sensori-motor disorders, CPR skills

Other Skills: Skills and ability to work well with parents, children, professionals and provide training

Private Practitioners

Caseload: Mainly paediatric caseload with occasional adult cases; usually long-term needs such as autism, language delays/disorders, slow learners. May provide domiciliary therapy.

Skill Mix: Knowledge of developmental milestones, AAC, training in assessment, development of reading and writing skills, CPR skills, sensori-motor disorders.

Others-

Example: Dyslexia Association of Singapore , TEACHME.

Addendum

1. Roles in brief

- **Clinical:** Clinical assessment, diagnosis and management of clients with communication and / or swallowing difficulties.
- **Administrative:** Service planning, coordination, implementation and continuous monitoring, budget planning, resource development etc.
- **Research:** Initiate and implement small scale research projects in the relevant areas.



- **Counselling:** Counsel and educate patients, family members and caregivers about evaluation findings, management plans.
 - **Teaching:** Ongoing education of team members to achieve best outcomes for the clients.
 - **Liaison with allied professionals:** establish a close network with other professionals such as physiotherapists, nurses, occupational therapists, special educators, physicians and psychologists.
- 2. Documentation and Reporting:** Maintain proper records of assessments done and treatment given to patients. Ensure the proper handing over of care takes place by way of discharge reports and transfer reports wherever applicable.

References

1. Brebner, C. (2001). *Multiculturalism: English in Singapore*. Australian Communication Quarterly, 3, 1, 46-48.
2. Gupta, A. F. (1994). *The Step-tongue: Children's English in Singapore*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.