

# Speech and Language Impairment



Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) also known as developmental language disorder, language delay, or developmental dysphasia, is a communication disorder that affects a person's ability to understand and use language effectively.

**Individuals with SLI may experience issues in four major areas:**

▲ Difficulties

⚙ Contributing factors

## Articulation

- ▲ Mispronounce speech sounds
- ⚙ For example, hard-of-hearing or cleft lip and palate

## Language

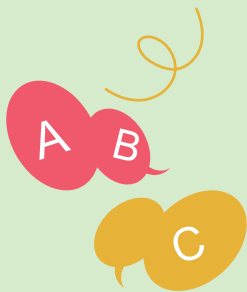
- ▲ Struggle to comprehend complex sentences, which may lead to partial understanding and communication breakdowns
- ▲ Struggle to organize sentences or use appropriate vocabulary to effectively express themselves
- ⚙ For example, developmental delay, learning difficulties, limited language stimulation, or autism spectrum disorder

## Fluency

- ▲ Experience stuttering, which may involve repetition of words or syllables, prolonged phonemes, irregular speech rate and speech blocks
- ⚙ For example, psychological, physical, or genetic factors

## Voice

- ▲ Overuse or improper use of vocal cords which may lead to problems with abnormal pitch, loudness, vocal quality, resonance issues and reduced vocal endurance
- ⚙ For example, neuropathological conditions, emotional disturbances, or respiratory or articulatory disorders



## Diagnosis and Treatment

In Hong Kong, SLI is diagnosed by speech therapists (also known as speech-language pathologists). Early intervention and targeted treatment can lead to significant improvements in communication skills, enhancing daily functioning and quality of life. Treatment focuses on holistic language development, providing context-specific interventions to support communication and academic access. Individual or group training is tailored to meet developmental needs and facilitate effective communication.

## Supporting Students with Speech and Language Impairment

University life can present unique challenges for individuals with SLI, particularly in social communications, academic performance, and emotion well-being. Helpful tips may include:

### Social Communication

- ✓ Encourage peer interactions through group activities and projects, enhancing communication and social skills
- ✓ Offer guidance in effectively navigating conversations and understanding social cues

### Academic Support

- ✓ Allow additional response time during class discussions
- ✓ Allow extended time in oral examinations (with professional's recommendation)
- ✓ Allow note-taking assistance in lectures to support their learning
- ✓ Consider alternative assessments methods that do not rely solely on assignments or examinations in oral format
- ✓ Give clear, concise and concrete instructions

### Psychological Support

- ✓ Refer to psychological counseling service for students' mental health and adversity coping capability

It is essential to recognize that individuals with SLI have unique strengths and capacity. Fostering an inclusive and supportive environment can empower students to pursue their goals with confidence and resources they need.

