

Training to enhance speech and language in children with communication disabilities

October, 2014

The project was aimed at organizing training to address speech and language disorders among children in mainland China. Children with hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorders, cerebral palsy, and mental handicap are prone to exhibit communication disorders. The prevalence of each disorder listed above in Mainland China is about 1 to 6 per 1,000 newborns. This means about 60,000-160,000 newborns may exhibit communication disabilities in Mainland China.

The program

The training covered four main topics that addressed treatment and evaluation of communication disorders in children with:

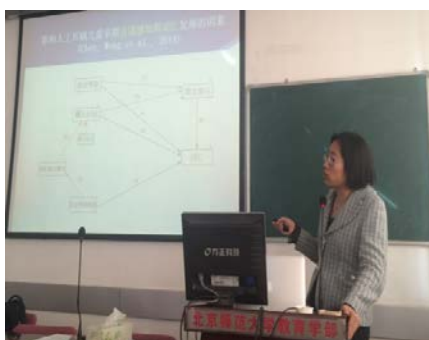
1. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD).
2. Hearing impairment
3. Speech and language disorders
4. Reading problems



This training was the first of its kind in mainland China. The workshop was held from Oct 25 through Oct 27, 2014, consisting of two days of lectures and four hands-on workshops on the third day. This differs from previous similar conferences in many ways.



1. International excellence: Our international faculty consisted of one teacher from the USA, four from Taiwan and two from Hong Kong. This is the first speech and hearing conference in mainland China given by a faculty consisting of Chinese speaking professors with clinical background and international standing in the relevant field.



2. Local application: Previous trainings were either given by English speaking experts who may not understand the culture and language of Chinese and how techniques and knowledge established in the English population could be modified to suit the Mandarin speaking population in mainland China. Our native Mandarin professors directly addressed the

local needs because the teachers are experts in the invention of communication disorders. The participants were able to raise questions and interact with the speakers. Some participants even brought students from their schools for in-class hands-on demonstrations.



3. Evidence based training: Previously held trainings were often led by local Mainland faculty who reported anecdotal clinical experience. Our lecture materials are evidence based and stand at the forefront of the research arena and clinical practice. The effectiveness of these techniques was verified by research. The theoretical bases were taught in the

lectures, prior to the introduction of the therapeutic techniques in the hands-on workshops. This ensures long-term sustainability.

The program was hosted by Beijing Normal University (BNU) and co-organized by the Division of Speech & Hearing Sciences from the Faculty of Education, HKU. While HKU was responsible in designing the program and inviting the speakers, BNU was responsible in providing the venue and implementing the logistics related to the workshop (e.g., announcement, registration, coordination).

Our speakers include:

Professor Lirong Cheng, San Diego State University, USA

Professor Lena Wong, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Dr Carol To, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Dr Mengrong Liu, National University of Kaosiung, Taiwan

Ms Leying Ma, National University of Kaosiung, Taiwan

Dr Xiudan Liu, Chung Shan Medical University, Taiwan

Dr Meiling Guan, NWL foundation for the hearing impaired, Taiwan

Outcomes

The workshop was aimed to bring to mainland China the most **up-to-date rehabilitation techniques** that could be implemented by teachers or practitioners during their daily work with children. There were 200 participants representing a range of backgrounds: 56 special schools, 21 rehabilitation institutions and hospitals, 17 mainstream schools, and 6 higher education institutions from as far as Haikou and Inner Mongolia.



A feedback survey was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the training. About 84% of the participants said that they had learned new knowledge, 88% said that the workshop helped with their daily work, and 81% found the learning materials help with their work. They were interested in having future workshops that address in detail the diagnosis and rehabilitation of children with communication disorders, in particular, speech and language problems in children with ASD and developmental delay. Participants would also like to have more hands on and practical learning opportunities.

Therefore, it is quite clear that this training would lead to **advancement in rehabilitation techniques** in the local context.

Future development

Future development will be explored:

1. The feedback from the workshop has led to the organization of a second 5-day workshop to be held from July 24 through 28, 2015 to cover two areas of communication disorders (i.e., autism and developmental disability). We have also increased hands-on experience from one day to three days.
2. At this coming workshop, HKU and BNU will discuss plans to implement further training in communication disorders.
3. HKU and BNU will also explore the possibility of mounting a Masters degree program in speech and hearing sciences at BNU, training local professionals and conducting research to advance this field in mainland China.