

# Development and Standardization of Phonetically Balanced Test Materials in Tamil Language\*

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The Science of Hearing is greatly indebted to speech audiometry, for its assistance in identification, diagnosis and specification of site of lesion in hearing impairments. Different types of speech materials have been developed in recent times, and speech audiometry has gained very important place in audiological evaluation.

The available speech materials in English are not suitable for Indians as only a very small portion of the population follows English. The importance of using the speech materials in the mother-tongue of the patient has been the point of argument and been accepted by many investigators.

In India Abrol (1971) was the first one to develop speech materials in Hindi. Later, Nagaraj (1972) has developed a Synthetic Sentence Identification test in Kannada and De (1973) constructed another word list in Hindi. Though Kapur (1971) has introduced word lists in Tamil, it was considered inadequate because of its shortcomings in phonetic composition and lack of proper standardization.

The present study is therefore an attempt to construct a word list in Tamil overcoming all the drawbacks of the previous list, to provide a means to test people who follow

only Tamil. The familiar words were collected from Rajaram's (1972) study of "Recall Vocabulary in Tamil" and the words were administered to ten people to ensure familiarity. Later, four lists of twenty-five words each were constructed, using the functional load of sounds in Tamil as reported by Meenakshisundaram (Kapur, 1971). All the word lists were recorded on a magnetic tape using KBR 71 Deck Type Tape Recorder (an accessory of Madsen OB 70 speech audiometer) with an appropriate carrier phrase in Tamil.

It was then administered to ten subjects to ensure the equivalency of all the four lists. After verifying the equivalency of all the lists, thirty subjects, selected from the student population of the Mysore University who knew Tamil, were tested to plot the articulation gain function of the present lists. It was found to be highly reliable on test-retest sessions. The concurrent validity of this test was checked by presenting the English PB list to normals having a knowledge of English and analyzing the scores.

## Conclusions

The following conclusions were made from the study :

- (1) Normals obtain optimum scores at 35 dB SL with reference to SRT,

\* Master's Dissertation, University of Mysore, 1976.

- (2) All the four lists were found to be essentially equivalent and can be used interchangeably, and
- (3) The present lists yield similar results like any other valid test of discrimination.

**Recommendations**

- (1) Administration of this test on clinical group is suggested.

- (2) A picture word discrimination test can be prepared and standardized for children based on this test.
- (3) Comparison of this test with any other discrimination test in Indian languages is also recommended.