



LLCd Symposium.
SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS.

- Name:** Madhavi Gayathri Raman
- Affiliation:** The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India
- Brief Bio:** Dr. Madhavi Gayathri Raman is Assistant Professor at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. Her research interests are Specific Language Impairment and dyslexia with special reference to the ESL context, curriculum development and materials design. She has prior experience teaching English at the primary and secondary levels and has worked closely with dyslexics during this time. She has worked on a language acquisition project funded by the Max-Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. Currently, she teaches courses in designing materials to teach reading, reading problems in the ESL classroom and curriculum and syllabus design on postgraduate and research programmes. She has published journal articles on the assessment of dyslexia in English and Malayalam, co-authored school-level English textbooks, pre-primary language playbooks, and a book chapter with TESOL on the use of plays to teach language.
- Theme:** Dyslexia and Language Impairment
- Title of Presentation:** Inflectional morphology in children 'at risk' for language impairment and dyslexia
- Abstract:** Inflectional morphology poses problems for young children engaged in the normal process of acquiring English as a second language (ESL) and those with Specific Language Impairment (SLI) with both groups exhibiting similar patterns of error. As children with SLI are at risk for later reading difficulties (dyslexia), there is an urgent need in ESL contexts to determine whether a child's errors in reading are due to incomplete acquisition of English or due to impaired language learning.
- 17 children aged nine years were administered a series of tests on verb and noun inflection in the first language (L1) Malayalam and second language (L2) English. The tests administered were categorized into oral production and judgment tasks on verb and noun past tense and plural inflectional morphology respectively. Three reading passages in English were also used to assess the reading of inflections in context.
- 5 children were identified as "outliers" and consequently as a population 'at risk' for language impairment and dyslexia as their performance on the oral production and judgment tasks across the two languages, Malayalam and English, fell 1.5 interquartile ranges below the 25th percentile. The data from these subjects show that difficulties are manifest on the same type of task and the same lexical category in both languages. The error pattern - the production of unmarked forms, the incorrect acceptance of present tense and plural forms, the rejection of past and plural marked forms - served

to differentiate between the normal and 'at risk' populations. The group identified as "outliers" on the production and judgment tasks was also responsible for over two-thirds of the errors on the reading of inflections in context.

The findings suggest that inflectional morphology serves as a reliable marker of language impairment and dyslexia in an ESL context. It also emphasises the need to 1) assess L2 learners in their first language and 2) compare the performance of L2 learners who are potentially at risk for SLI with the English of their L2 peers rather than with the English of monolingual peers.