

Speech-Language Pathology: A Look at What Makes this Field Interdisciplinary by Nature

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Abstract: Speech-language pathology is an interdisciplinary field which began its development in the early XVIIIth century. Modern speech-language pathology, for its part, has arisen in postmodernity and is based on discoveries in classical sciences. The constructs of sciences, whether new, redefined or reinvented, are produced in and by a scientific community that agrees on the definitions, presuppositions and objectives of the knowledge being constructed (Fourez 1998). For this reason, interdisciplinarity can only be defined by enhancing the precision of terms that are still sufficiently vague to be considered as synonymous by some researchers and theorists. A clear understanding of this terminology requires a literature review and leads to the use of a common vocabulary that aims to increase the transparency and accessibility of concepts and models that stem from the precisions provided to these definitions. Over time, concepts evolve, are refined, are defined more precisely and they eventually circumscribe a previously unexplored reality. To frame speech-language pathology in an interdisciplinary perspective, a review of the literature was conducted to define terms that are sometimes used in parallel, at times positioned in a hierarchy or used interchangeably.

Keywords: Interdisciplinarity, Transdisciplinarity, Multidisciplinarity, Pluridisciplinarity, Disciplinarity, Speech-Language Pathology, Speech, Language, Speech-Language Pathologist

Speech-Language Pathology - An Integrated Interdisciplinary Science

Speech-language pathology, a relatively recent field of study established in the postmodern era, is based on discoveries in classical sciences that go back to the ancient Greek era. A science, whether new, redefined or reinvented, is the construct of a scientific community that agrees on the definitions, presuppositions and objectives of the knowledge that is being constructed (Fourez 1998). For some bodies of knowledge, the sole purpose of existence lies in their capacity to reunite various disciplines. This is true of communication sciences, women's studies, cognitive sciences, environmental sciences, human development, regional studies, industrial relations, speech-language pathology as well as health sciences (Laflamme 2011). For this reason, interdisciplinarity can be defined only by enhancing the precision of terms, some of which are vague enough to be considered synonyms by some researchers or theorists. A clear understanding of this terminology requires a review of the literature and leads to the use of a common vocabulary or lexicon, in order to increase the transparency of concepts and models that arise from the more precisely established definitions. It is well known that with time, concepts evolve, become refined, are defined more precisely and eventually circumscribe a previously undetermined reality. For example, today we use the term "theorist" to describe Plato, Aristotle, Rabelais, Kant and Hegel, even though the term did not exist in their times (Klein 1990). How can we clarify terms that are sometimes used in parallel, sometimes hierarchically positioned, and at times interchangeable? In reality, speech-language pathologists practice in an interdisciplinary manner, many of them without ever having studied interdisciplinarity itself.

This paper aims to provide an overview of the terminology and definitions that have been used to describe interdisciplinarity, as well as to show how speech-language pathology is inherently interdisciplinary by nature. The following section briefly examines the terms according to the