

Language Deficiency and its Consequences for the Hearing-Impaired was presented by Mr. Anas M.B. He pointed out the areas where a hearing-impaired person would suffer because he cannot hear properly. Prof. V.I. Subramoniam raised a point relating to brain structure and the deficiency in hearing.

The fifth paper, *Cultural Interaction in a Narrative Discourse Analysis* presented by Dr. Lekhakumari was a study based on Thakazhi's novel *Kayar*. Mr. Madhavan and Dr. Thampuran expressed their views on this paper.

After tea break, a session for the Tamil papers was arranged, which was chaired by Dr. Madhivanan. The Tamil researchers - Ms. D. Sheeja, Ms. Ajithakumari and Ms. Luma Bernet - presented their papers and discussed.

On Friday at noon, Mr. Chellappa, a government officer from Andhra Pradesh delivered the Kasipandian Endowment Lecture, which was presided over by Prof. V.I. Subramoniam. It was a befitting memorial lecture to Mr. Kasipandian who earned reputation as an administrator and a humanist.

In the afternoon, two sessions were held. The session in the Conference Hall was on *Computational Linguistics*, chaired by Mr. T. Madhava Menon. After an introductory talk by the chairman, the session started at 2.30 p.m. The first paper, *Music: An Input to Linguistic Development - A Speculative and Experimental Study* was a PowerPoint presentation by Dr. C. Vipin Das. He pointed out that both hemispheres of the human brain are involved in the cognition of music, and has evolved even before the power of speech and language. The discovery of the flute among the Neanderthal artefacts predating the cave paintings indicates that music evolved before humans developed other means of communication. Aphasics recover the ability to sing more readily than to speak. Ms. Jayashree, supporting the paper, pointed out that higher frequencies are usually associated with sharpness. She pointed out that instrumental music preceded vocal music, hence auditory channels were involved. Prof. Murugaiyan objected, noting that human beings can produce music by humming without the involvement of vocal cords. The chairman summed up by saying that the thesis is meaningful and significant though not a complete explanation of the phenomena.

There were three other papers from the same area. *Revitalization of Local Languages through the Development of Language Technology* by Mr. P. Sreekumar, *Spell-checker System for Malayalam: A Heuristic Model* by Mr. Sajith Lal and *Malayalam Morphological Analyser: Word Paradigm* by Mr. Jagannath G. focussed on the increasing role of computer in processing Malayalam. Mr. Sreekumar urged

the need to revitalize local languages as there is a tendency in children to neglect their mother tongue because "computers speak English". He urged the need for development of software in which Malayalam would be integral for the operating system. Mr. Sajith Lal explained the steps taken to develop a spell-checker for Malayalam. Mr. Jagannath detailed the structure and functions. The chairman concluded the sessions with his remarks.

[To be continued in the next issue]

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DIALECTS IN TAMIL HELD AT THE FRENCH INSTITUTE OF PONDICHERRY FROM 23-25 AUGUST 2006

B. Gopinathan Nair presented a copy of the *Dialect Maps of Malayalam: Ezhava/Tiya* published by the I.S.D.I. to Jean Pierre Muller, Director, French Institute of Pondicherry.

The dialect investigators of Kerala - the late T. Velavan, P. Somasekharan Nair, R.V.K. Thampuran and A.P. Andrews Kutty were remembered.

A three-day International Conference on Dialects in Tamil from early to modern times as reflected in writing and speech, jointly organized by the Department of Indology, French Institute of Pondicherry and the Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil, C.I.L.L., Mysore was held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Conference Hall, French Institute from 23rd to 25th August 2006. In his inaugural address, the Director of the French Institute, Jean Pierre Muller, said that the purpose of the conference was to examine the place of dialects in history and contemporary Tamil culture through comparative perspective with regard to other South Indian languages and the European experience. He added that it further aims to explore and develop tools to understand and depict dialect diversity in the production and circulation of language.

M. Kannan, Researcher of the Department of Indology of the French Institute and co-ordinator of the conference, said that the social, regional, religious and caste identities with regard to the diverse dialects of Tamil have to be explored and documented in detail. R. Elangain, member of the Group, Centre of Excellence for Classical Tamil, C.I.L.L., Mysore emphasized the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the study of Tamil dialects through historical, linguistic and anthropological perspectives and also to study the regional, social and professional dialects. He also pleaded for a methodological survey of modern Tamil dialects.

Following the inaugural and plenary sessions, there were four sessions, viz. (i) Defining dialects, defining identities, (ii) Dialects: Comparative perspectives, (iii)

Visitors admire the Encyclopaedias and the Handbooks. The I.J.D.L. volumes are also praised for their standard. But they move out very slowly from the store-room.

Dialects, Literature and Reference, (iv) Dialects: Puducheri dimensions. Altogether thirty papers were presented and discussed. Iravatham Mahadevan said that literacy was widespread among ancient Tamils due to the strong tradition of local self-government, political independence and the spread of Buddhism and Jainism. Francois Gros recalled the dialectologist's study of diatopic, diachronic, diastatic and diaphasic variants. He also stressed the need to look at the relationship between dialects and literature. R. Kothandaraman in his paper *Perspectives of Tamil Dialects* discussed the diglossic situation in Tamil Nadu and stressed the study of textual dialects, its role in reconstruction of prehistory. B. Gopinathan Nair in his paper on *Dialect Survey of Malayalam in Retrospect* gave a brief account of the assumptions, methodology and major gains of the systematic and comprehensive surveys on the social and regional dialects of Malayalam with reference to the Ezhava/Tiya, Nair and Harijan communities spread throughout Kerala in the backdrop of the recently published *Dialect Maps of Malayalam*.

Other papers presented and discussed include S.V.S. Shanmugham on *Tamil Dialectology*, Subbarayalu *Inscriptional Dialects*, G. Srinivasa Varma *Study of Tamil Dialects in Tamil Nadu so far: A bird's eye view*, T.V. Gopal Iyer *Dialects as vehicle for construction of identities, regional and social*, S. Manoharan *Tamilakam - the land and people: an ethnic account*, Senthil Babu *Dialects in practice*, R. Perialwar *A plea for the documentation of ancient Tamil dialects of Karnataka (Meelkkootte Sanketi and Tigla Tamil dialects)*, Raghava Variar *Literary use of dialects in Malayalam*, Alberto Formai *Regional languages / Dialects in Italy: History, testimony and dreams*, P.R. Subramanian on *Dialect Dictionary*, Madhukesvaran *A dialect novel and a dialect dictionary*, Perumal Murugan *Dialect as a literary language: Experiences*, Kanmani Gunasekharan on *Writing a dictionary and writing a novel*, Imaiyan *Dialects and Writers*, Tamilselvan *Dialects, Literature and literary movements: Experiences*, V. Manikkam *Folklore and Tirunelveli dialect*, Arivu Nambi on *Literary dialects*, Pulavar Venkatesan *In search of a Puducheri dialect: Inscriptions, diaries and literature*, Vengada Soupriya Nayagar *Influence of French Language on Puducheri Tamil*, A. Pasupathy *Identifying Puducheri Proverbs*.

The papers touched upon the various aspects of dialectological studies, both synchronic and diachronic, the role of dialects, i.e. the functional use of language in speech, writing, literature and lexicography with reference to the South Indian languages in general and Tamil language and dialects in particular. All participants took part in the discussions.

R. Elangain, R. Kothandaraman, P.R. Subramanian, Subbarayalu, Kannan and several other scholars have

appreciated the work on the dialect survey of Malayalam done in Kerala and the published *Dialect Maps of Malayalam*. The seminar came to a close on the afternoon of 25th. The co-ordinators of the conference, Elangain, Kannan and their associates deserve appreciation for the excellent arrangements and hospitality extended to the participants.

B. Gopinathan Nair

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: 34th A.I.C.D.L.

(Continued from last issue)

The existing educational pattern of teaching languages is very costly and time-consuming. Teaching of regional languages, Hindi and English occupy one-third of the teaching time. Out of fifteen years of study for graduation, over five years are spent on the study of languages alone. The method of teaching languages in India is outmoded, resulting in a large number of failures and in low achievements. The annual expenditure in governments in the Centre and States will amount to about Rs. 2,500 crores. One-third of teaching time can be saved by improving teaching methods and by adopting improved methods resulting in annual savings of Rs. 800 crores. This amount can be made available to fund research proposals. Our faculty of applied linguistics will have to be active in this field.

Tribal Studies

Another neglected field is the study of Dravidian tribal societies. A recent analysis of census figures of India has shown that nearly 70% of tribal population - speaking one or the other Dravidian language - is found in the Northern States of India, like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal, which form the outer Aryan group. The wider spread of Dravidian languages covers Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The population of Dravidian tribes is steadily decreasing and, in one or two cases, they have completely switched over to the majority language. For example, the Dravidian tribe Cheros of Bihar now speaks Hindi. Linguistic archaeology has shown that wider spread and contact of Dravidian with Finno-Ugrics, Elamites, Sumerians and the African and Australian language is a plausible theory. A description of these societies in order to correlate them with linguistic evidences is a crying need. The study of recent migrants in Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Fiji, the Middle East and South Africa, and the analysis, especially of their convergence and identity, is a long-felt need. It is useful for foreign relations. We can be proud that we have published a three volume *Encyclopaedia of Dravidian Tribes*, ably edited by Sri. T. Madhava Menon I.A.S. (Retd.). This is a landmark in the tribal studies of India. Before the