



A handbook of
LANGUAGE
and **SPEECH**
DEVIATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

TERMS AND CONCEPTS OF LANGUAGE AND SPEECH

Introduction

Human language has played tremendous roles in civilization as a result of man's ability to communicate with each other. In the social milieu, a speaker who has developed the ability to express himself or herself to the fullest extent whether through natural acquisition or by training will probably attract more friends and be best understood. In the field of schooling and economics, language is the most obvious way to achieve success. Any form of language be it an oral communication, natural gestures, writing, reading, pantomiming and miming, sign language and finger spelling, art, drumming or a combination of any of these is determined by intelligence. Other determinants are rules that bind that aspect of language such as, environmental factors, personal interest and preference, job demands and educational levels of the interactants. Speech as widely used by the human race depends on hearing acuity and how convenient it is to the context and the listener and speaker. Nevertheless, there can be a communication gap if the pupil cannot understand the teacher or the care giver cannot input meaning to what the ward is transmitting either through speech or sign language. This breakdown can cause frustration on both sides and may affect social interaction, negate academic performance as in reading, writing, spelling and cognitive abilities. The language deficit can attract name calling or rejection from peers. Besides, the person in the future may be restricted to the profession or vocation which does not require much verbal interaction. The display of speech, for instance, can be extremely valuable to professionals like lawyers, teachers and politicians. Would the public easily accept someone with language deficit to represent them in the courts of law or the parliament to defend their interest? In certain quarters of the world, those with non verbal abilities (to engage in these fields) are not accepted to these posts. Nevertheless, in Uganda, Alex Ndeezi, Chairman for Uganda National Association for the Deaf was elected to parliament to become the first deaf member of parliament in Africa (GNAD, 1997). To have decent jobs and be equally competent communicators, there should be an early identification programme to re/habilitate these children or adults by professionals who are knowledgeable about handling these cases.

In line with these, this chapter concentrates on the definitions of terms and concepts associated with language and speech. It also highlights the functions of language in children and adults.

Definitions:

A. Language: what does it mean?

Many authors have varying definitions of language based upon their own experience and background. Out of the many definitions, however, there are commonalities running through with the indications that any language is the code or