Communication, Speech, and Language

We would build a profession independent of medicine or psychology or speech, based in colleges and public schools.—Van Riper, 1981

Concepts and Definitions

Human communication begins with the conceptualization of ideas in thought. **Communication** is the process by which one individual expresses those ideas, feelings,opinions, or messages to others and receives and understands ideas, feelings, opinions, or messages from others.

Communication is the process of sharing information and involves many **communicative functions**, such as seeking social interaction, requesting objects, sharing ideas, and rejecting an object or interaction. Itrequires sending messages in understandable form (encoding) and receiving and understanding messages (decoding). It always involves a sender and a receiver of messages, but it does not always involve oral language. Communication can also be **nonverbal**; in fact,much of the meaningful interaction among humans is nonverbal (Owens et al., 2010). Deaf people communicate through gestures; babies communicate basic wants through crying. Communication refers to any way that we convey information from one person to another. For example, we use e-mail, text messaging, or phone calls as ways to communicate. In addition, smiling, waving, or raising your eyebrows at a comment are all examples of nonverbal communication. Sign languages, such as American Sign Language or Seeing Essential English, are nonverbal conventional linguistic systems used to communicate.

Language (both verbal and nonverbal) and speech are important tools for human communication. A **communication disorder** impairs the ability to transmit or receive ideas, facts,feelings, and desires and may involve language or speech or both, including hearing, listening, reading, or writing.

1. Speech

The most widely used means of communication is speech. **Speech** is the communication or expression of thoughts in spoken words, that is, in oral, verbal communication. Speech can be further divided into ***articulation***, the motor production of speech sounds, ***fluency***, the flow of speaking including rate and rhythm, and ***voice*** including vocal quality, pitch, loudness, and resonance (American Speech-LanguageHearing Association, 1993).

Structurally, speech can be viewed as consisting of four systems: **respiration**, the breathing that supports speech; **voicing**, the sound powered by the vocal folds/chords;**resonance**, the means by which sound is changed as it travels through the cavities of the neck and head; and **articulation**, the formulation of speech sounds by the lips,tongue, and other structures. More specifically, it is the integration of these four systems that is needed for the production of normal speech. An element that is important to everyday speaking is the forward flow of speech. Fluent speech is rhythmic and smooth, lacking pauses, repetitions of speech units, or any other interruptions of speech flow. Still another aspect of everyday speech is the ability to utilize elements such as stress, pitch, timing, and loudness to impart meaning. For example, in American English there is generally a rise in pitch at the end of a question.

2. Language

Very simply put, language is a rule-governed system of arbitrary symbols that stand for meaning. Language is the system we use to communicate ideas and includes both expressive language, through which we send messages, and receptive language, through which we receive and understand messages.

Language is a rule-governed behavior. It is complex and involves multiple domains, such as nonverbal language, oral language (i.e., listening and speaking), and written language (i.e., reading and writing). According to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association, **language** can be defined as a complex and dynamic system of conventional symbols that is used in various modes for thought and communication (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association Committee on Language, 1983).

Language In Brief

Language is a rule-governed behavior. It is defined as the comprehension and/or use of a **spoken** (i.e., listening and speaking), **written** (i.e., reading and writing), and/or **other**

communication symbol system (e.g., Sign Language).

Spoken and written language are composed of receptive (i.e., listening and reading) and expressive (i.e., speaking and writing) components.

Spoken language, written language, and their associated components (i.e., receptive and expressive) are each a synergistic system comprised of individual language domains (i.e., phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics) that form a dynamic integrative whole (Berko Gleason, 2005).