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Forum

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FORUM

Dear Dr. Lloyd:

An article appeared in the January 1982 (Vol. 15, No. 3) issue of the *JOURNAL OF REHABILITATION OF THE DEAF* entitled "Comparison of the Language Abilities of Deaf Children and Young Adults". I am disturbed to note that much professional writing on deafness, including this article, continues to refer to the "language abilities" or "communication problems" of deaf persons, without specifying which language or mode of communication is being discussed.

The above-mentioned article describes a study of the English ability of the deaf subjects and the problems they experience with certain English syntactic structures. In light of the growing body of knowledge about the rich communication systems of deaf people, including American Sign Language, it seems critical that professional publications make a very precise distinction between American Sign Language competency and English Language competency.

Would you consider establishing an editorial guideline encouraging future contributors to carefully edit their manuscripts to eliminate the imprecise use of the terms "language" and "communication"?

Sincerely,
Claire L. Ramsey
Olympia, Washington

Dear Mr./Miss/Mrs./Ms. Ramsey:

Talk about imprecision! How do we determine whether Claire is a male or female?

In a more serious vein, I can certainly sympathize with your desire for unambiguous terminology. Unfortunately, English does not lend itself very well to such a goal. For example, are you aware that the term 'ability' may mean either the potential for or the accomplishment of? Obviously, the two are quite different, yet the same term stands for both. Interesting?

Unfortunately, perhaps, in this society certain terminologies may be used as synonyms when they may not strictly be such. You bring to the readers' attention just such an example. It is beyond me to see how we can alter something which seems to be a function of the language/culture. In this country and in the field of deafness, most people use the term 'language' as synonymous with 'English'.

I think you are on a little better, more firm ground when you suggest that "communication problems" be more clearly defined. Very often, the communication problem that exists is the inability of the hearing person to communicate with the deaf person. This, I think you would view as a classic example of a misuse of the term. I would tend to agree with you. However, the majority of persons are normally hearing persons, consequently, the majority view tends to prevail and the usage of the term, right or wrong, is to mean the deaf person has the problem.

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We do have an editorial policy to correct as many errors in usage as we can. This results in more correct usage, but the basic problem is in the sphere of education of educated persons. For example, do you have any idea how many 'educated' people use the term 'i.e.' to mean 'for example'? Do you have any notion as to how many talk about the 'age of onset'? Can you possibly imagine how many 'knowledgeable' persons talk about 'sign language' when they are referring to signing? We make attempts to correct most of the above errors, but sometimes we simply cannot because of many, sometimes complex, reasons.

We do try, though.

Glenn T. Lloyd, Ed.D.
Editor

You may not have noticed, but we are now (beginning with this issue) listing the members of the Editorial Board of the JRD. It was the feeling that those persons who do serve in what has been an anonymous capacity should have some degree of public recognition. Thus, we are instituting the practice of listing the names of members of the Editorial Board. One former member whose name is not on the list is Dale Williamson. Dale recently retired and asked to be relieved of his responsibility to the JRD. We would like, however, to acknowledge that Dale served for many years, was a valuable member, and has earned our thanks and best wishes for a pleasant retirement.

This may also be a good time to explain, very briefly, that our Editorial Board reviews all submitted manuscripts without the knowledge of who the author may be. Our reasoning for this, quite simply, is that the manuscript should be judged on its merits alone and knowledge of who the author(s) may be could prejudice the reviewer.

We should also like to request that persons interested in serving on the Editorial Board are welcome to make application themselves or to be nominated by others. We need correct address information, areas of interest (expertise) for reviewing, and a brief statement of qualification as a reviewer. Send all applications/nominations to the Editor of the JRD at the address on the inside of the front cover.