

The Handbook of **Language and Speech Disorders**



Edited by
**Jack S. Damico, Nicole Müller,
and Martin J. Ball**

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A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2010

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Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ,
United Kingdom

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The handbook of language and speech disorders / edited by Jack S. Damico, Nicole Müller, and Martin J. Ball.

p. cm. -- (Blackwell handbooks in linguistics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4051-5862-6 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Speech disorders. 2. Language disorders. 3. Communicative disorders. I. Damico, Jack Samuel. II. Müller, Nicole. III. Ball, Martin J. (Martin John)

RC423.H3258 2010

616.85'5--dc22

2009030171

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12pt Palatino by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong
Printed and bound in Singapore by Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd

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Introduction

JACK S. DAMICO, NICOLE MÜLLER,
AND MARTIN J. BALL

Providing general overviews and updated information on the state of any discipline through the publication of a handbook is a well-accepted practice. In the field of speech-language pathology in the United States, such volumes can be traced to at least the 1940s with the publication of a handbook dealing with speech aspects of the hard of hearing (Bluett, 1947). More familiar, however, is the *Handbook of Speech Pathology* (Travis, 1957) that so many professionals made their primary reference text during the late 1950s through the 1980s. Edited by Lee Edward Travis, a founding father of speech pathology in the United States (Tweedie & Clement, 1976), this text was first published in 1957 having 33 chapters and 27 authors. Within 15 years a new version, the *Handbook of Speech Pathology and Audiology* (Travis, 1971), had been expanded to 50 chapters and 44 authors. At the time of publication, this handbook provided state-of-the-art discussions on the areas believed to be most crucial to the understanding of the discipline of communication sciences and disorders. Since the 1970s, the original volume by Travis has not been updated, and although other texts have been written, there is still a need to provide sufficient and timely content in a comprehensive work. This *Handbook of Language and Speech Disorders* is an attempt to provide such coverage.

Providing a handbook with sufficient and relevant content raises the issue of scope. As the discipline has expanded, particularly with regard to the impact of language and language disorders in the social, educational, and communicative realms (Ball et al., 2008; Duchan, 2008), the need for research, theory, and clinical applications has increased accordingly. Further, researchers and practitioners have realized that in addition to the information on various disorders and conditions, our assumptions and practices themselves must be viewed more circumspectly so that the science of communication disorders and its clinical applications may be advanced in the best possible way. A text that does not carefully consider the most necessary and relevant topics in attempting to accomplish this purpose might be overwhelmed. In his preface to the newer version of the *Handbook*, Travis understood the difficulty in putting together such a reference text and he

reaffirmed an earlier statement that no one individual could “react authoritatively to the subject matter of communication disorders” (1971, p. v). Indeed, such a task requires a careful collaboration.

In order to create this handbook, we invited authors from around the world to write articles within their areas of expertise. There are 26 chapters that are divided into four general sections: I: Foundations; II: Language Disorders; III: Speech Disorders; and IV: Cognitive and Intellectual Disorders.

Part I, “Foundations,” is oriented toward several issues that are germane to all of the disorders that are covered in the rest of this volume. As the discipline has matured, there have been realizations that the impact of communicative disorders and the roles that professionals may play in their remediation are subject to a host of variables that cross disciplinary boundaries. These variables and the manner in which they are handled create an overall foundation from which appropriate responses to the various disorders detailed in the other three sections are formulated. Issues dealing with cultural responses to the various impairments, the ways that cultural and societal expectations may affect service delivery, even the manner in which the process of identifying communication disorders has been addressed over the past several decades provide this foundational information. Similarly, appreciating the impact of input and output systems on communication functioning overall, and the role of genetics in the discipline, is also pertinent. If work within the human communication sciences and disorders is to be effective, these variables must be considered when addressing the various disorder types and the specific impairments.

In the first chapter, Damico, Müller, and Ball consider the complexity of identifying and labeling individuals as being communicatively disordered. While it is commonplace to employ labels and diagnostic categories as if they were discrete and fixed, this process is actually a social construction that has implications for both the professionals who apply the label or category and the recipients of that label or category. The complexity involved and how it should be addressed is treated in this chapter. Chapter 2 (Goldstein and Horton-Ikard) presents a foundational and operational definition of diversity and then outlines the influence of cultural and linguistic diversity on communicative disorders. The chapter briefly focuses on the role of culture as manifested in communication, on the variation within linguistic systems, how the concept of disability is culturally determined and, importantly, how these diversity issues influence assessment and intervention.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with some of the basic facets of input and output in communication and how the sensory systems and intelligible output are so crucial to communication even before the various disorders are considered. Kretschmer and Kretschmer (Chapter 3) discuss the primary sensory systems of audition and vision and how they impact language and speech development. They provide information on the impact on language and communicative development of deafness and hearing impairment, and the influence that such sensory impairments may have on interactional abilities. They also review what is known about the impact of blindness on language development and communicative functioning.