

# **Terminological Abuse versus Inclusion: An Analysis of Selected Terms Used to Describe Persons with Disabilities in Luvale**

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## ***Abstract***

*This was a qualitative study on how some selected 'Luvale' words were used to negatively stereotype persons with disabilities. Eight (8) participants were purposively selected based on their experience with the 'Luvale' language and their personal explanations of the terms used to describe persons with disabilities. The aim of the study was to explore the meaning of terminologies used to describe persons with disabilities as a form of exclusion. Interviews were conducted in 'Luvale' local language, and equivalent translations and interpretations were provided in English by the researcher. Data was analysed by thematic analysis where common explanations given by the participants were grouped together and differences separated. The study revealed that Luvale speakers had different versions of selected words used to describe persons with disabilities. Some words were used interchangeably while*

*others were correctly explained. Some of the words carried very strong negative meaning that led to negative stereotyping of disability. It was recommended that 'Luvale' Language speakers and specialists should develop appropriate vocabulary that addresses persons with disabilities respectfully in order to avoid negative stereotyping, a vice that is against contemporary inclusive philosophy.*

**Keywords:** Inclusion, disability, stereotyping, Luvale, Terms.

## **Introduction**

There is a wave of change in contemporary society that persons with disabilities should not be negatively stereotyped, whether psychologically or physically. The use of language to discriminate other people should be discouraged at all cost if society is to be inclusive. Terms that been used to describe persons with disabilities in English Language have evolved. For instance, persons with disabilities in the 1977 Educational Reform of Zambia policy document were called 'handicapped'. The word handicapped has since been tagged as offensive to persons with disabilities. Currently, in the faculty of special education, it is common to use terms such as 'learners with special educational needs' instead of 'disabled learners' or 'handicapped learners'. The feeling is that speakers and writers should see the person first and not the disability. Further, the focus should be on the needs the person has first rather than

his or her weakness (disability). It is believed that this would help society think before using terms that are considered offensive and help persons with disabilities feel free to integrate in the communities they belong.

In special education, the most commonly confused terms in language use are impairment, disability and handicap. Even specialists usually use the terms interchangeably. The term, 'impairment' in this paper, is a term used to describe a physiological loss of an organ or part of the body as a result of a disease, injury or accident. It can also be defined as a structural abnormality on any part of the body resulting from an accident, injury or disease. For instance, one is said to be impaired when he or she suffers a loss of a finger from an accident. Having an impairment does not mean one is disabled. The gravity of the impairment determines the disability. One is only disabled once the impairment restricts functioning. For instance, if the loss of hand in an accident makes one fail to write, drive or hold things, the person is disabled in a particular function. One is not disabled in everything when only one organ is affected. Therefore, it is necessary to avoid using these terms without reasoning. Disabilities result from the severity of impairment. The term, 'handicap' is discussed fully with regard to its origins in the next section. However, a handicap denotes a social disadvantage resulting from the severity of disability and impairment. A handicap incapacitates one's potential to participate in life activities in society or participate in activities that can earn a living. Thus, the person cannot perform activities that can support his life or perform certain independent living activities on their own.

The differences in the terms explained herein are more technical than stereotypical. However, there are terms that describe individual types of disabilities which are often misused and become offensive words to persons with disabilities. Thus, in Luvale, it was imperative to explore words used to describe individuals with disabilities such as the intellectually challenged, hearing and visually impaired, the physically challenged and those with albinism.

### **Statement of a Problem**

According to the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012, a person with a disability should not be called any derogatory name because of the disability the person has (GRZ 2012). This statement is law and anyone using derogatory names on a person with disability should be prosecuted. However, the position for this paper is not to inflict punishment but to enhance inclusive attitude among language users to be aware of the negative and none inclusive terms used to describe persons with disabilities. Without addressing cultural and language related aspects that derail the implementation of inclusive education and inclusive society, persons with disabilities would continue to suffer humiliation and discrimination resulting from offensive language used to describe them. This study therefore explored the different ways selected words such as ‘Chimbinda’, ‘Chitonji’, ‘Chileya’, ‘Kaveveve’, ‘Kajikamatwitwi’, ‘Kamama’, ‘Kapuputa’, and ‘Kasa’ are used to describe persons with different disabilities. The selected words are part of Luvale vocabulary but their use in the Luvale daily vocabulary and how their meaning may

influence negative stereotypical behaviour has not been explored. The selected words, therefore, needed a deeper analysis of how they are contextually used in Luvale in order to determine the implication of their negative use on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society as a whole. In the article, the terms have been explained in both Luvale and English.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. Explore how the words, ‘Chimbinda’, ‘Chitonji’, ‘Chileya’, ‘Kaveveve’, ‘Kajikamatwitwi’, ‘Kamama’, ‘Kapuputa’, and ‘Kasa’, are used to describe persons with different disabilities in ‘Luvale’ language.
- ii. Provide a contextualised analysis of the implications the words in (i) have on inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions used were:

- i. How are the words ‘Chimbinda’, ‘Chitonji’, ‘Chileya’, ‘Kaveveve’, ‘Kajikamatwitwi’, ‘Kamama’, ‘Kapuputa’, and ‘Kasa’ used to describe the different types of disabilities in Luvale?
- ii. What are the psychosocial implications of how such words are used on inclusion of persons with disabilities in society?

## Literature Review

Words and names that people use to address or call each other are not just mere labels given, but they carry meanings unique to the users (Udoye, 2018). Words that people use can reflect several messages which can be interpreted differently by audiences (Chanda, 2010). In other words, the language that people use reflects what they think and can influence how they deal with situations (Clark and Marsh 2002). Language demonstrates the ethos in which a group of people believe. It is a reflection of how people in society see each other (Blaska n.d). Thus, language use plays a crucial role in the contextualisation of stereotypes within cultural groups (Beukeboom and Burgers 2019). Beukeboom and Burgers (2019) observe; “Social categorisation and stereotyping are inextricably related to language use. Language reflects which categories are singled out as targets for stereotyping, and is one of the main carriers of stereotypic information we come to associate with these categories. Many complex societal problems result from social category stereotypes and the affective reactions and behavioural tendencies towards category members they may elicit (e.g., prejudice, discrimination, tensions, and conflict surrounding ethnic, racial, religious, gender, sexual orientation categories). (p 28)”. From history, language has played a very significant role in promoting stereotypes of how persons with disabilities have been perceived and portrayed. The seclusion of persons with disabilities was necessitated by the way people with disabilities have been portrayed through language. Karapita (2017) observes that the

language used during the late 1800s and early 1900s categorised individuals based on their presumed degree of disability. Words such as Crazy, Insane, Lunatic, Moron, Idiot, Imbecile, Mental and Feeble-Minded were used to describe a child or person with intellectual disability. For instance, the idiot referred to severe intellectual disabilities (Karapita, 2017). Other terms used were mentally defective and subnormal. These terms were basically diagnostic in that they related more to the problem as a medical condition that needed cure. The Canadian inclusive language manual discourages a number of terms such as handicapped and crippled among others. The word handicapped which means “hand in a cap” or “cap in hand” denoting begging (Karapita (2017, Barking and Dagenham 2001), also exaggerates the limitations a person may have by generalising as though everyone who is disabled is handicapped (Karapita (2017). The term then goes to further show that all persons with disabilities are beggars, yet not. Using the term ‘handicapped’ is offensive to persons with disabilities.

If language is used to create classes of people, negative attitudes are created based on how the different classes are perceived. Yzerbyt et al., (2004) noted, most conflicts, prejudices and discrimination emanates from society’s creation of sharp and fixed boundaries among its peoples. Negative use of language towards persons with disabilities further affects their self-image and general self-concept. For children and learners in school, they can abscond classes because peers do not regard them positively. In an era where the rights of every person to belong to their communities should be respected, the need to use appropriate language

terminologies in communication becomes a critical consideration for an inclusive society. Karapita, (2017) reports that the Canadian media has developed an inclusive language manual in which several terms have been selected and explained on how they can be used to persons with disabilities to ensure inclusion. For instance, the word ‘disability’ should not be used with a definite article, ‘the disabled’, because this gives them a different class of people from others, which means discrimination (Karapita, 2017).

Galvin, (2003) argues that labelling, though not the only linguistic process affecting the status of persons with disabilities, stereotypes disabled people as “patients” and “cases”, and also leads to descriptors such as “afflicted by,” “suffering from,” “stricken with,” and “a victim of”, which infer weakness, lack of agency, martyrdom and individual responsibility. Galvin (2003) observed that other terms detrimental to the image of disabled people is the use of adjectives as nouns, as in “the deaf,” “the blind,” “the mentally retarded,” “the handicapped,” “the disabled,” “the developmentally disabled” and “the chronically ill”.

According to Dajani, (2001), adjectives used to describe persons with disabilities contribute to the continued process of discrimination. Dajani says, “All of these adjectives used as abstract nouns contribute to the process of stigmatisation by reinforcing the tendency to “see” persons with disabilities only in terms of those disabilities. These labels rivet attention on what is usually the most visible or apparent characteristic of the person. They obscure all other characteristics behind that one and swallow up the social identity of



the individual within that restrictive category (p: 199).

From the literature, language is a vehicle for the transmission of beliefs and myths that negatively place persons with disabilities at the lower edge. Unfortunately, the terms used to describe persons with disabilities are not decided by the disabled themselves. Certainly, they do not like to be called by stereotypical names. This further worsens their position in the society in which they live. A gap worthy this study was therefore identified on the usage of different terminologies to describe persons with disabilities in Luvale.

### **Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

This study was informed by the Social Identity Theory. It is a Social Psychology theory which believes that social identity is a sense of one's relation to the group to which one belongs. One's sense of belonging to a group, which may be a family or a class, is a source of pride and self-esteem (McLeod, 2008). Thus belonging to a group gives a sense of social identity, that feeling of who one is in relation to his social surrounding. According to this theory, the social world is divided into two; 'them' and 'us', as way of categorising people into social groups. In such a division, the in-group which is made up of the 'us' may discriminate against the out-group which is made up of 'them'. The central hypothesis of social identity theory is that group members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image (McLeod, 2008). Although stereotyping may be both positive and negative, most stereotyping is negative (McLeod, 2015). In this study, society of persons without disabilities (us) may tend to use negative

stereotyping language to enhance their status in society against persons with disabilities (them), thereby creating a perpetual disadvantage against persons with disabilities' access to social amenities. By use of negative language, persons with disabilities feel they are not part of the community in which they live because the social classes created there in are discriminatory. They feel they are worthless and are not considered as part of the productive society for they are seen as: 'that one is disabled; he or she cannot do anything'. Such categorisation has more negative implications on the individuals with disabilities in the way they look at themselves and on their contribution to social and economic development since they are regarded and regard themselves as ineffective.

## **Methods**

This study was qualitative. It was a case study of how selected terms are used to describe disability in Luvale. Since reality in a qualitative research is considered subjective, the researcher chose to use this design to collect in-depth descriptions of the terms that describe disability in Luvale. Thus, 8 participants (3 female and 5 males) were purposively selected as follows; 1 teacher of Luvale language, 1 radio broad caster of Luvale at one of the radio stations in Zambia, 1 old man believed to be a veteran of the Luvale and five experienced adult native speakers of Luvale language. Homogenous sampling was applied because the participants were known to be part of the Luvale language having same language and cultural characteristics. Kombo and Tromp, (2006) explain that homogenous sampling is applicable on small samples with similar characteristics used to

describe the subgroup to which they belong. Participants were interviewed via phone calls and recording of the conversation was done for analysis. The participants were asked if they could agree to help answer questions regarding the meaning of the selected words, how the words differed and how the said words were used in ordinary daily life. All participants contacted agreed to take part in the study. While six were interviewed, one requested to be given the words and he wrote the answers and sent them via whats-app. Interviews took between 20 – 30 minutes. Participants were interested in the study because they perceived the terms given to them as brain teasers. During interviews, the researcher, who is also Luvale disguised himself as a learner in order to collect in-depth data and understanding of participants' understanding and interpretation of the terms. Probing skills were used mainly to establish the differences between terms and how else the words were used beyond disability and why. Qualitative data analysis was done using of critical listening, comparing responses and organising of similar responses in themes. Differences were equally noted and used in the interpretation.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### *Terms, Meanings and Discussion*

Chimbinda – is a Luvale term used to describe a person with an impairment related to diminutive stature. However, different users of Luvale Language have different interpretations of how the word 'Chimbinda' is used. According to Participant 1, 'Chimbinda' is a

word that describes someone who is stunted in physical growth. A dwarf of some kind of a person or someone with stunted physical growth. This respondent had this to say:

*Chimbinda apwa munthu uze twambenga ngwetu muthu uze wakuhona kukola, ikiye chimbinda. Twambenga nge muze muli yenu ngana, Kalunga namihane mwana, kaha vathu navamba ngwavo owu kanyike muliminenu. Kulya anakulya kukola chiku. Muthu uze wakulinga kuta museteko yambwende chiku numba alya tuhu kanawa".* (56 year old Male –Zambezi District; 06-02-2019)

Translation: “Chimbinda” is a person that doesn’t grow. That’s a ‘Chimbinda’. Let me say as you are and God has given you a child. In Luvale they used to say for child, grow food for him and feed him but he doesn’t grow. The person is at the same stage and size, very short without growing”.

Another respondent or participant (2) defined Çimbinda as a person who is a dwarf compared to the rest of the peers. He said:

*Chimbinda Muthu uze nakivi, vakwavo vose vavasuku oloze ikiye hanga apwila hamwe kaha, chinjikizo ali namyaka likumi oloze mwasoloka nge ali namyaka ivali. Cheka muwana alisetula lyehi, tupucha kaha najinyama mujimba wose oloze kotaluka pimbi.”* (48 years Old Chris – Chavuma 06-02- 1019)

Translation: ‘Chimbinda’ is a person who is stunted in growth compared to others of the same age. Sometimes, a 10 year old looks 8 years younger.

Participant 4 said: “*hehehehe... Chimbinda*” *kaze kamuthu kakehi, aaaa kakehi kanapwaha ngana!*” (73 year old respondent -11.02.2019)  
Translation: He explained that Chimbinda’ a very short person, very short and undersized..

Participant 3 gave different versions of a ‘Chimbinda’. One version is that it is a person with diminutive stature endowed with ability to do things on his or her own though the things they do never become meaningful. He further explained that the word ‘Chimbinda’ means an imbecile. The third version is that ‘Chimbinda’ is a person who is abnormal or a fool.

But participant 1 further explained that, those without sight and hearing cannot be said to be ‘Chimbinda’. One common description that appeared among all the participants was that a ‘Chimbinda’ is a dwarf like person with abnormal diminutive stature. Thus, the person has underdeveloped body stature and generally all body organs are very small or short. However, the meaning of the terms is usually misconstrued by other people and mostly used negatively. For instance, one of the participants defines ‘Chimbinda’ as a person who is generally not well created or is not normal and says such a person can also be called a fool. One female participant said; “Chimbinda muthu wakuhona kuswa numba chileya, muthu uze anakulihanjikila oloze kuzata mulimo kulumbunuka chiku” (30 year old female participant- 5. 02.2019) meaning someone who is not normal or a fool or so someone who is able to talk but cannot perform duties normally. The differences in the understanding of the concept of the disability are what to some extent lead to its misinterpretation and misrepresentation.

The consequence of such misunderstanding leads to generalisations and subsequently negative stereotyping of all forms of disabilities. From the findings, the degree does not come out. Everyone is classified the same.

Negative use: The most unfortunate use of the word 'Chimbinda' is when it refers to a person without any disability. Thus, if a person without a disability is said to be a 'Chimbinda', it is a stereotype meant to make the other person feel bad. When such is the case, there is a connotation that likening someone to another person who is disabled in some way is not condoned. When a person with a diminutive stature listens to such, they feel they are not human and not positively perceived. Such kinds of expressions kill the self-image and esteem of persons with different challenges. All the expressions used to describe a 'Chimbinda' depend on individual orientations and experiences of the type of disability. What participants failed to realise is that even a diminutive person can have a combination of other disabilities. For instance, the person may be a dwarf as well as an imbecile. But some dwarfs are not imbecilic. Some dwarfs have normal intelligence while others do not. To describe a dwarf generally with other characteristics does not give a good representation of the person in such a condition.

Chifwayi and Chitonji- are terms used to describe a person who is physically disabled. Either the person has deformities on one or more of the limbs or some limbs missing. This may be congenital or acquired. The following were the explanations of the terms by participants.

The first respondent (Participant 1) reported that:

*Lizu lyachifwayi lizeee twambenga ngwetu nachifwayi na chitonji avavatu vapwa vamwe vaze valifwana. Nachitonji na chifwayi oloze uno haliko kuhandunuka hali chifwayi. Kuli ufwayi umwe unahase kumuwana muthu nakolo oloze chifwayi lyavene uze vechi kwambanga ngwavo owu muthu mwane apwa chifwayi hamwe yayize kusemuka mujimo lyanaye, uze mwana kukatukanga pimbi, nyi hamwe mavoko akusoseka nyi pamo mutwe wahenga, navamwamba nge uze muthu ufwayi wenyi wakusemuka nawo. Chitonji nahase kupwa omu ali Mr ....., kaha nge stroke naingukwata, nyi pamo ngwaholokele hakinga kaha lihinji lyahokoka”.*(56 year old Man –Zambezi District; 06-02-2019)

Translation: the word ‘Chifwayi’ is the same as the word ‘Chitonji’, and the difference is minor in that ‘Chifwayi’ is an inborn disability such as failing to stand, or having small hands or an abnormal head. However, ‘Chitonji’ is a disability that results from an accident. A ‘Chitonji’ can become a ‘Chifwayi’ when the degree makes one fail to move.

Participant 2 says, ‘Chifwayi’ is an inborn or acquired condition that incapacitates a person’s ability to perform daily activities. He says, “muthu alinaukalu mujimba wose, liso pimbi, mavoko, matwitwi, mukavatu muthu uze ali naukalu wauvulu namilimo kazayizatako apwa kaha fwikila mwomwo mujimbakuzatakanawa chauchi”. (48 year old participant – Chavuma 06-02- 1019)

Translation; Chifwayi is a person with serious dysfunctions because the person has no eyes, hands and ears. Therefore, such a person has a lot of difficulties to perform daily duties.

While participant 1 equates ‘Chifwayi’ to ‘Chitonji’ with a small difference, participant 2 explains that ‘Chitonji’ is a type of disability affecting the legs. He said: *“muthu uze ali naulema kumahinji oloze mujimba wose alikanawa, milimo mwazata. Veka lihinji, limwe, vakwavo osena, vekha kutambukila hamukombo vekha mukalikoki, vakwavo hamwe engila lyehi kalepa ngolo pimbi jakwimana’.* (48 years Old man – Chavuma 06-02- 1019).

Translation: this is a person with a disability of the legs.. Some, it affects one leg, others two, and some use clutches and wheelchairs while others may have suffered stroke and the body does not have energy to stand. But participant 3 says ‘Chitonji’ is any person with some difficult on the hands, face, legs, ears or even an abnormal body height.

There are different interpretations of the words ‘Chitonji’ and ‘Chifwayi’. Clearly, the words are different but participants seem to confuse the words. ‘Chifwayi’ should be equated to a ‘handicapped person’, a person who is incapacitated by a condition making him or her fail to function or work independently, as explained by participant 2. However, one common understanding between participant 1 and 2 was that Chifwayi is inborn and that the condition is incapacitating. The problem is that of equating ‘Chifwayi’ to a ‘Chitonji’ when the two terms are completely different.

*Negative use:* first, the failure to understand and differentiate the terms that describe different disabilities leads to wrong labelling and subsequently



negative stereotyping. There are extremes of the words ‘Chifwayi’ and ‘Chitonji’ which become offensive when used to label or stereotype persons with disabilities. When a child did something wrong or when two people annoy each other, there is a tendency to call each other by such terms. The aim is to annoy and make the person feel bad. However, this does not reflect well on persons with disabilities who live within the so called inclusive society or community. They would regard themselves unwanted in society. It is such tendencies that make inclusion difficult for persons with disabilities.

Chileya (Fool) - The term is used to describe a mentally challenged person, a moron, an idiot or an imbecile. These English words, fool, imbecile, moron or idiot are not appropriate terms to use to call any person including the person with challenges in intellect and or adaptation. Intelligence tests have been used in history to rate the levels of mental retardation of victims with intellectual challenges. However, such terms suggest insulting language towards persons with intellectual difficulties.

In Luvale, participants had their own explanations of the term ‘Chileya’. One participant explained that people usually confused the word ‘Chileya’- fool’ with other terms such as ‘kukikama’ or ‘kuzaluka’ – madness’ and explained that the concepts are different in that a mad person could be taken to psychiatric hospital popularly known as ‘Chainama’ for treatment and could become well while the fool cannot be cured. However, sometimes mad people degenerate into fools. “nge mwana nasemuka chileya kuvanga kulifwijila hatulo. Uleya wapwa kusolola vilinga vize vyakuluwa chikuma,

vize mwalinga nawa uze muthu kuvimbila pimbi, nahase kuviputuka hamo muwinyike hakumusema uze mwana mukamuwananga lozenge kululuuuu, uze mwana chileya”. (Participant 6, 07.02.2019, Chavuma)

Translation: when someone gives birth to a child who is a fool, you have to bless yourself by spitting saliva on your chest so you should never have one as well. A fool is one who does not do normal things, does wrong things and does not stop doing so. It can start in childhood and you will notice that the child is not normal as saliva just drizzles out without control. Such a condition is symptomatic of a fool.

Another participant explains, “Chileya muthu uze mwalinga vyuma vyauheu kulya vyamajilo mujingungulu, vyakuhanjika kulumbunuka chiku, mwanahanjikila mwomwo kutukana kuli ikiye ikiye ukalu wauchi kutambuka uselesele””. (Participant 2- 07.02.2019, Chavuma)

Translation: a fool is someone who does foolish things, eating dirty things from bins. What he does is not meaningful, and can say and do anything or even walk naked.

Negative use: Literally, the term ‘Chileya’ means someone who is not normal in thinking and doing things. This is the equivalent of morons and idiots according to Clark and Marsh (2002). Clark and Marsh (2002) say, Moron is a Greek word meaning ‘Moros’ – Foolish coined by Dr. Henry H. Goddard and proposed to the American Association for the Study of the Feebleminded by him in 1910. It was accepted by the Association and described a person with a mental age between eight and twelve years and who possessed an I.Q. below 75. Idiot

is also a word derived from a Greek word, 'idiotus', meaning: "a person who does not take part in public life (Clark and Marsh 2002). Interestingly enough, unless one is severely intellectually impaired, no one including the persons with intellectual challenges would accept to be called morons, or fools. One perplexing experience I had in Solwezi in 2004 was when an intellectually challenged boy of about 10-15 years climbed a mango tree and was plucking mangoes. Then one of my fellow lecturers at Solwezi College of Education at the time got the mangoes the boy was plucking from the mango tree where he had climbed. When the boy saw that, he told the man to stop picking his mangoes. He addressed him just like his age mate as follows, "you, can you stop picking my mangoes!" The man was so annoyed that he told the boy that he was a fool. The boy reacted and directed the same abuse at the lecturer because he picked the mangoes which the boy plucked. I knew the boy but my colleague did not. I knew the boy was from the special unit at Kikombe Basic School then. But the lesson I learnt is that just like any other person would want to be respected, young people and even learners with intellectual challenges want to feel respected and never to be humiliated. It was even surprising to me that even among the 'so called educated'; there was lack of prudent selection of words to use when addressing other human beings regardless of age. An intellectually challenged learner as the one in the above experience would help us learn something from the encounter but other learners with disabilities would withdraw for being labeled negatively. The word 'Chileya' (fool), is in many cases used to humiliate people who do not please

us in what we do or in how we communicate. But its use portrays a negative stereotype behavior. Language may be innocent, but those who use it may be at fault.

What remains unclear is how persons or children with autism, those with hyperactivity and behavior disorders would be called. These are different categories. Lumping them under one category as intellectually challenged does not present a true picture of intellectual disability.

Further, the use of the word ‘Chileya’; (fool) when used to banish bad behavior among children without disabilities makes especially those with mild intellectual challenges feel out of place.

Kapuputa – is a word that means blind person. The word is made up of a prefix ‘ka’ and a stem ‘puputa’. It means someone who cannot see. There is no single word that explains someone who is partially sighted. For someone who is partially sighted, the Luvala, say “Kamona kanawako”; meaning “he or she does not see properly or clearly”. In many situations, the term is used negatively. “Kupuputa” is a verb that explains failure of someone to perform actions purposefully or to do things without direction.

Negative use: The Luvala people use the term “Kapuputa” to demean other people who are unable to do certain things accordingly even when they have normal sight. In fact, it is used as an insult on one’s intelligence. For instance, if someone fails to do an obvious thing, he or she is called as such. Thus, the term has become a derogatory term in usage and a blind or visually impaired person who may happen to be around during such a conversation may feel disparaged. The term promotes negative stereotyping for persons

with visual impairments as people who cannot do anything or see things the way they are supposed to be.

‘Kajikamatwitwi’(Deaf), ‘Kamama’(Dumb) and ‘Kaveveve’ (deaf and dumb). The researcher wanted to know the differences between the words that are often confused in usage to describe persons with hearing impairments. Participants were asked to explain the meanings of the words and explain the differences as well as the contextual use of the terminologies. One of the participants explained the terms ‘Kaveveve and Kamama’;

*Kaveveve youmwe lika ikiye lika kamama.  
Twambenga kaveveve apwa kamama.  
Kaveveve muthu uze wakulinga ikiye  
kuhanjika pimbi, kwivwa pimbi oloze  
kumona anakumona, ikiye kaveveve. Kuhona  
kuhanjika ikiko umama. Muthu nge kamama  
kahanjikako. Kamama muthu uze wakuhona  
kuhanjika kanawa, kamama nahase kupwa  
uze wakulinga numba vihande namuhulisa  
ove evi vyuma vyapwanga ngachili oloze  
ikiye kuhasa kuvyambulula chiku, kulamuna  
chiku. (Participant 7: 08.02.2019, Zambezi)*

Translation: ‘Kaveveve’ (deaf) is the same as ‘Kamama’ (dumb). Let me say ‘Kaveveve’ is a dumb person because he doesn’t talk and does not hear although he can see. Failing to talk is ‘umama” dumbness. But being a ‘Kamama’ also means the person does not know how to explain things even when he has seen and is expected to explain what he has seen but fails to do so.

Kajikamatwitwi- this Luvale word is used to mean someone who is deaf or cannot hear. The term exists in Luvale Language and is acceptable

in use. However, it is sometimes used negatively in certain situations. One of the participants explains;

“Kaveveve apwa kamama vene. Kajika matwitwi unonyi twambenga nge kuli kaveveve, kaveveveve atwama nachihanda chakujika matw Witwi. Emwane twahase kumuvuluka nge chipwe tuli nenyi kuno kuzuvo mwahana chinjikizo kaha ngwenyi yami kangwevwakoko. Oloze chachinene kaveveve ikiye kajika matwitwi.” (Participant 1: 06.02.2019, Zambezi)

Translation: When asked whether, a ‘kaveveve’ is also a ‘kajikamatwitwi’, the participant responded, “Kuli veka mwane matwitwi auchi oloze anakuhanjika. Kaveveve muthu wakuhona kwivwa nakuhona kuhanjika oloze kajika matwitwi mukakuhona kwivwa kaha.” (Participant 1: 06.02.2019, Zambezi). Translation: Some people without hearing ability are able to speak.”

One of the participants explained that the words kaveveve, kamama and kajikamatwitwi are usually misused as insults. “haze uno chapwa uno kutukana, kuhulamisa uze muthu, “ove kamama ove”, “ove kajikamatwitwi ove!” mukwenu uno, mangana evwishise chipwe evwenga kumuchima kukola, kaha ndombo. (Participant 1: 06.02.2019, Zambezi)

Translation: The words are used to ridicule a person who is dumb or deaf so that he is forced to think or listen to issues, or to make him or her feel very bad because of what he or she has done. Sometimes people can fight over such terms.

Participant 4 provided very brief and clear explanations as follows:

Kaveveve–“*Kuhanjakuhasa chikulilimilyango, nge mwana ali nakalaka kulilimi keshi kukahanjikakoko*”, (73

year old participant 4-11.02.2019, Mufumbwe) “doesn’t talk, just produces the sound ‘veveveve’, the tongue is hard, when a child is born with tongue disorder (Kalaka) under the tongue, he will never speak but can hear”

Kamama – “Kuhanjika kanawa pimbi, kuhanjika mamamama “doesn’t speak well, the person just produces the sound ‘mamamama’. (73 year old participant 4-11.02.2019, Mufumbwe)

Kajikamatwitwi- “kumutambika kwivwa pimbi ‘doesn’t respond when called upon” (73 year old participant 4-11.02.2019, Mufumbwe)

This participant brings in the issue of tongue disorder (Kalaka) as a cause of dumbness which participant 2 also explained as follows:

Kaveveve muthu najiki matwitwi nakalaka kulilimi kwivwa chiku nakuhanjika nawa pimbi oloze meso alinawo namavokonamahinji. (Participant 2: 07.02.2019)

Translation: ‘Kaveveve’ is a person who is deaf with a tongue abnormality and does not speak but has eyes, arms and legs. From the explanations, I still observe some confusion between the terms. While all the participants agree that a ‘Kaveveve’ does not talk, participant 1, and 2 agree that a ‘Kaveveve’ does not hear and does not speak, but 70 year old participant 4 says a ‘Kaveveve’ does not speak but can hear because the tongue does not move owing to a tongue disorder called ‘Kalaka’. The ‘Kalaka’ is said to cause hearing loss and dumbness in Luvala. The ‘Kalaka’ is a tongue disorder in which the bottom vein thread holds the tip of the tongue making it fail to move. However, whether it causes hearing loss or not is not scientifically proven although it affects speech production.

*Negative use:* “Kajikamatwitwi” is a derivative compound word made up of two words namely ‘Kajika’ someone with closed ‘matwitwi’ ears, thus meaning someone with closed ears. Although scientifically, deafness is defined by the inability to perceive sound, in Luvale, such a person’s ears are closed, meaning he or she cannot hear sound. Even though the expression ‘closed ears’ is used, it does not literally mean there is no ear canal. The term ‘Kajika Matwitwi’ is also used to banish children who go against elders’ guidance. For children or young people who don’t follow the teachings of elders, they are called by such a term. The idea though is to discourage bad behaviour among developing children and to condemn unacceptable behaviour among some adults. However, the connotation in the use of such an expression is negative in that any child with any type of bad behaviour is a ‘Kajikamatwitwi’ as though those who are deaf are as such by their own making. Although a deaf person cannot hear being called as such, the term sends a wrong picture about deafness in itself. Children who grow with such language develop negative attitudes towards persons that are deaf and hearing impaired.

The word ‘Kamama’ literally means a person who does not talk but it is also used to describe a person who is like a fool, someone who is intellectually low and cannot explain things as expected of him or her. The word is derived from the failure by a person to speak clearly so that he or she is understood by others. The word is made up a prefix ‘ka’ to refer to a person and ‘mama’, which is a word literally meaning mother. Thus, a ‘kamama’- Dumb person is a person who only knows the word ‘mama’ or mother not any other words in Luvale or one who



stammers. Stammering in this sense is likened to failure to pronounce words clearly or appropriately. It refers to a person who knows only one word or a few words to express him or herself. Thus, the use of the word to describe a person who is inherently dumb is stereotyping the person with dumbness as dull. The fact that persons without disabilities get annoyed to be referred to as such, means the word has a very strong insulting aura.

The word 'Kaveveve' has been explained as an umbrella term carrying the meaning of inability to hear and speak. Thus participants explained that a 'Kaveveve' is also a 'Kajikamatwitwi' but also unable to speak while a 'Kajikamatwitwi' may be able to speak and cannot be said to be a 'Kamama'. The explanation by participants seems to be satisfactory but lacks a scientific touch of defining congenital deafness and acquired deafness. Thus, there are persons with pre lingual deafness, persons who never learnt speech because they became deaf before learning speech. These are both deaf and dumb. There are also persons with post lingual deafness, (those who become deaf after they have learnt speech). These are able to speak but cannot hear sounds. This understanding is quite encouraging in the understanding of persons with hearing impairment. However, like the way the other two words are used, sometimes the word 'Kaveveve' is abused when it is used to banish negative behaviour among young people and adults with unacceptable behaviour. In such cases, persons with hearing impairment come to realise that their state of deafness is not respected by the communities in which they reside.

Kasa (Albino) – is a term used to describe a person with albinism. The word refers to the skin that persons

with albinism have. It is believed the skin produces strong scent which is usually unpleasant. The skin cracks especially during the cold season and as such persons with albinism are believed to be unhygienic.

Participant 3 says “*Kasa mwivwa ngwavo anukha chikova chenya nawa cheji kupulikanga lwola lwa chishika.*” Translation: an albino is one with stinking skin which cracks during cold season.

Participant 8 says, “*Kasa kuli yetu valuvale uze wakulinga kumusema kuja nge kumeso poli, kumeso vene ngana katoma vene ngana kumeso lengenyelengenyene nge kase, chize kutoma chenya alinga nge chindele unonyi alihanduka nachindele ikiye alitomena namwenyi atwama nge nakachivumba ngana.*” Translation: An albino, among the Luvale, is someone born with faded or covered eyes. The eyes look like those of a cat and he is white in colour like a white person but is not a white person because his white colour is somehow different from a white person and he has a strange scent.

Participant 2 said:

*kasa muthu mwapwa namusongo wachikova, mwapwa nge chindele oloze musongo meso enya nge ngatwe kuvanga wakulama kanawa mujimba wechi kuwunukanga nge majipimbi, navimbulu, meso kumona kanawa pimbi nge kuli musana chikuma.*

Translation: an albino is a person with a skin disease, and he is like a white person but the eyes are like those of a cat. He has to be taken care of very well because the skin wears out and the skin exudes an unpleasant smell if there are no skin ointments to treat the skin. An albino has hindered sight when there is too much light.

Negative use: From all the 8 participants, an albino is described as a special type of race which is like a white person but born from two black persons. However, some descriptions do not reflect very well on the persons with albinism. The first is the likening of the albino's eyes to those of a cat. This has different connotations and negative stereotypes. Firstly, a cat in Luvale tradition is usually associated with wizardry and witchcraft. It is believed that the cat sees well in the night when fishy activities associated with witchcraft take place. Likening the albinos' eyes to the cat worsens the already negative myths about albinism. Second, the scent of the skin is something that repels other people. But all this is a result of lack of medical chemicals that can help them keep their skin clean and free from an unpleasant scent. The scent is a biological reality that calls for care of persons with albinism but language should be selected to accord persons with albinism the respect they deserve because they did not choose to be what they are. Using language that is negatively stereotypical can affect their desire to mix and interact with other people and as such, their learning can be affected. Their sense of belonging to their own community is deprived by the negative perceptions towards them.

There are several myths about albinos in the community which need to be corrected. For instance, albinos are said never to die and so even when the albino dies, usually formal funerals are not held. They are assumed to only disappear as opposed to dieing. This is not true. They are human and they die. However, because of negative attitudes towards albinism, no one is advised to mourn lest another would be born in the family. Even

their birth is never celebrated. When an albino is born in the Zambian traditional family, there is no ululation, a traditional signal of celebration of the birth a baby. Those who visit a family where the child with albinism is born first spit saliva on their chest to block any chances of having an albino born in their families. From the researcher's bank of experience at one school in North Western province, a teacher collapsed after opening the door for an albino child who was enrolled in his class. He did not know that the person who knocked was an albino. The teacher had immense fear because of the myths he heard about albinos and the lack of exposure to such children. The accident made the teacher equally acquire some physical deformities on his body which he has to date. But he was a science teacher who was expected to have absolute knowledge of albinism. These practices and myths affect the way society perceives persons with albinism. Myths and negative attitudes towards persons with albinism affect inclusion. Until we deal with our cultural beliefs and the language we use to describe persons with disabilities, inclusion for persons with disabilities in our communities will become rhetoric.

## **Conclusion**

Like the English words 'disability' 'impairment' and 'handicap', the words that describe persons with disabilities are in many cases interchangeably used and many people use them differently. The terms used to describe persons with disabilities in Luvale have outlived their time and carry more the negative connotation about disability than the positive connotation. The terms have

mainly been used negatively to portray persons with disabilities as people who are not well created and cannot do anything meaningful. As a researcher, I also tend to wonder why persons with disabilities cannot be called by their given names as Chisengo, Kakoma, Kayombo, Samba, Kutemba, Kaumba, Senda, Mbingila and so on. There is a tendency to call them by their disabilities. In cases where one makes an effort to use the name, the disability is also added. These are the practices that continue to perpetuate negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities in society. Furthermore, there seems to be limited vocabulary that categorizes different disabilities and as a result, some different disabilities are grouped under one category, which does not portray a true picture about the disabilities in the community. For instance, it is not correct to group persons with intellectual disabilities with those with autism under the same category because the two are different. Moreover, there is need to find appropriate terms that show respect for persons with disabilities as people with different challenges as well as abilities. Although qualitative studies do not satisfy generalisability, most, if not all Zambian local languages use these terms negatively leaving persons with disabilities open to discrimination, stigmatisation and bad treatment in many spheres of their lives. Until we localise and contextualise the concept of inclusive education, it would be difficult to achieve inclusion. This study therefore opens up gaps for further research in the other 73+ languages and dialects that exist in Zambia. Unless the Zambian local language communities address issues of language use, inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and in school will remain rhetoric.

## **Recommendations**

Language carries people's culture. If not carefully used, persons with disabilities will continue to feel discriminated.

- Society is changing. Language also develops. Society should identify appropriate terms for use when referring to persons with disabilities and children with special educational needs.
- Vocabulary expansion in areas of disability is cardinal for inclusion to be a reality
- The Zambian local language radio programmes at ZNBC and the district community radios should be used as platforms for sensitising the local people on appropriate terms to be used to address people with different challenges.
- Schools should develop an inclusive schooling outreach policy to sensitise the local people on the types of disabilities, causes and appropriate terms to use to address persons with disabilities in daily communication.
- There is need for Luvale language specialists to work in liaison with specialists in special education to develop Luvale inclusive language manuals or booklets that Luvale language users can familiarise with in order to use appropriate and none offensive terms when addressing persons with disabilities.
- Persons with disabilities through Disabled Peoples' Organisations in Zambia should come up with inclusive language disability manuals that comprise acceptable terms that can best be used to describe persons with disabilities without offensive feeling.

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