

Speaking: language and skills

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



1. THEORY OF SPEAKING This part, dealing with the theoretical background of speaking, aims to determine the position of the speaking skill among the other skills and to analyze the elements that speaking as a skill includes. Speaking is as a language skill used as a communication tool to share ideas, feelings, opinions, thoughts, or information by using the target language. It is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Nunan stated “ that the success in learning a language is measured in term of the ability to carry out a conversation in the language. “[1] Second language learners should be able to learn speaking in order to increase and improve their ability to use English to communicate. As Harmer claims, to be able to communicate means that people possess all four skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, Ur proposes that most of the learners´ intention is to learn how to speak so the greatest stress lies on developing speaking skills, which as Bygate maintains is underestimated skill in many ways. “ Perhaps this is because we can almost all speak, and so take the skill too much for granted. ” (Bygate, 1987, VII) Considering speaking in a foreign language we also need to know “ a certain amount of vocabulary and grammar”. (Bygate 1987, 3) Bygate also maintains that if learners want to accomplish the purpose of communication through speaking, they have to take two language aspects into consideration. These are the knowledge of language and the skill to use the language. The major difference between the knowledge and skill is that although both are comprehensible and memorisable, only a skill might be retreaded and drilled. (Bygate 1987, 4) 1. Speaking as a Skill Bygate divides the speaking skill into two different

components: motor-perceptive skills and interaction skills. As well as motor-perceptive skills, which “ involve perceiving, recalling, and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language” (Bygate 1987, 5) learners also need interaction skills which involve “ making decisions about communication, such as: what to say, how to say it, and whether to develop it, in accordance with one’s intentions, while maintaining the desired relations with others. ” (Bygate 1987, 6) These Interaction skills are affected by two conditions, according to Bygate. The first one, so called processing conditions, is connected to the internal conditions of speech. That means that speech occurs under the pressure of time. The second one, which we might call reciprocity conditions, involves the dimension of mutual interaction between the interlocutors. The language skills are often divided into sub-skills, which are specific behaviours that language users do in order to be effective in each of the skills. Speaking has two sub-skills. These are pronunciation and intonation. (British Council[2] [online])

2. Relationship among Speaking and other Skills According to Harmer, skills are in some way separable, which means that one day learners concentrate on one skill such as for example reading, and the next day on speaking only, etc. But as he claims, “ in fact this position is clearly ridiculous for two reasons. ” (Harmer 1991, 93) The first reason is that one skill cannot be accomplished without another skill. As an example, we rarely write without reading and we cannot have a conversation and use speaking skills if we do not listen. The second reason is that “ people use different skills when dealing with the same subject for all sorts of reasons. ” (Harmer 1991, 93) As an illustration, imagine a music critic, who goes to a concert where he listens to a new

band, takes notes and then writes a review about it. The next day the critic describes the concert to his/her friends and reads them the article he wrote. In this illustration, we might see that people use different skills while dealing with the same subject for all sorts of reasons. Scrivener in his book says: “ Traditionally, language teaching in many countries concentrated on grammar, reading and writing [while] nowadays most interest is expressed in a balanced spread of work on all language systems and attention is also given to skills work in its own right, particularly emphasizing listening and speaking. ” (Scrivener 1998,) As it has been pointed out earlier; there are four basic skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Inseparable part of speaking development is listening. Listening helps to develop a phonetic side of learners language and therefore it is closely related to the speaking. In the document released by The National Capital Language Resource Centre (NCLRC) is said that: “ Listening is the language modality that is used most frequently. ”(NCLRC [online]) Listening is for a learner of a foreign language very important. Listener has to be able to identify the message, understand the message and be able to interpret the message. Reading is a process where reader uses specific knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure to comprehend and encode a message in some text. Finally, writing is the last skill that is related to the speaking. Very important aspect for a good writing is a logical structure. Writing seems to be the most challenging of all the skills. Even native speakers sometimes struggle “ since it involves not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way. ” (SIL[3] [online])

3. Receptive and Productive skills According to SIL, these four skills

are allied to each other by two criteria. First criterion is the mode of communication which is oral or written and the second criterion is the direction of the communication such as receiving or producing the message, which are in other words receptive and productive skills. (SIL [online])

Relations between those skills might be presented in the following chart: |

Productive skills | Speaking | Oral | | | Writing | | | | Written | | Receptive

skills | Reading | Written | | | Listening | | | | Oral | Jeremy Harmer claims: “

Speaking and writing involve language production and are therefore often

referred to as productive skills. Listening and reading, on the other hand,

involve receiving messages and are therefore often referred to as receptive

skills. Speaking and listening usually happen simultaneously, and people

may well read and write at the same time when they make notes or write

something based on what they are reading. ” (Harmer 1991, 35) 1. Receptive

skills As already mentioned, receptive skills are reading and listening. “

These skills are sometimes known as passive skills. Receptive skills deal with

acquiring and processing new information. In the process of learning new

language, learners often begin with receptive understanding of the new

information, later move on to productive use. “[4] As an example of

receptive skills we can mention skimming, scanning, using abbreviations,

making notes and summarising. 2. Productive skills These skills are

comparable to the receptive skills. “ They are also known as active skills and

include speaking and writing. “[5] Learners need to know these skills to

produce the language. Productive skills deal with how learners plan and

present their own ideas based on information that they have already worked

through. We can touch on some examples of productive skills like

brainstorming, solving problems, improving memory, making inferences, empathising and assessing own progress. To sum up, we can state that speaking, reading, listening and writing cannot be developed separately and therefore every single person who wants to acquire a foreign language and be able to speak efficiently, has to use all four skills altogether.

----- [1] <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/teaching-speaking-skills-2-overcoming-classroom-problems> [2] <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/sub-skills> [3] Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc [4] <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/receptive-skills> [5] <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/productive-skills>