

The Speech and Language Glossary

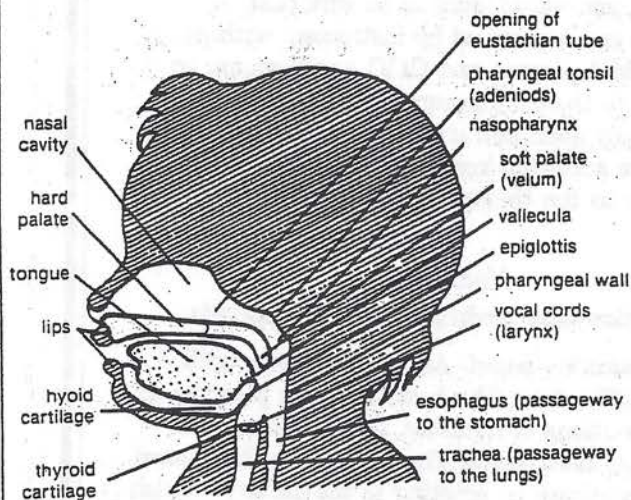
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What is Speech?

The term "speech" is used to refer to the actual physical aspects of communicating a message. There are three major aspects of speech:

1. Articulation

Articulation refers to the actual physical production of sounds in speech. Speech requires air to pass from the lungs through the *larynx* or voice box, causing the *vocal cords* to vibrate. The sound is then altered by the *palate*, tongue, lips, and teeth.



These structures can:

- Block and then "explode" the air stream, as in "p"
- Make the air stream be narrowed and directed against the teeth or palate, but not completely blocked off, as in "s" or "f"
- Allow part of the air stream to flow through the nose, as in "m"
- Alter the air stream by the size and shape of the oral cavity, depending on the exact position of the tongue, as in vowel sounds. These structures which can interrupt the flow of air, or change the oral cavity are called *articulators* (lips, jaw, soft palate, tongue, and pharynx).

2. Voice

As mentioned above, the air stream passes through the larynx or voice box, causing the vocal cords to vibrate. The size and shape of a person's vocal cords, along with the size and

shape of the mouth influence a person's voice. Voice is the sound produced by the vibration of the vocal folds. There are several aspects of voice:

- **Loudness**
- **Quality** (hoarse, weak, strident, husky, breathy)
- **Resonance** (vibration of air in the throat and nasal cavities during speech)

3. Fluency or rhythm

Language generally flows out in speech in an appropriate rhythm, with pauses and stress in the right places to express meaning. Fluency is how smoothly sounds, words, and phrases flow together during speaking.

What is Language?

Language is an organized set of *symbols* that are used to communicate thoughts and feelings. A symbol is a sign that stands for or represents something else. For example, the word "dog" is a symbol used to represent a specific kind of animal. These symbols are combined according to the rules that govern language. Symbols can be gestures, as in sign language. Or they can be written, as in use of the alphabet for writing words and reading. Sounds can also be used as symbols. This article will be concerned with oral, or spoken, language.

Language always has some kind of *form*. Language also has *content* and *use*. **Form** refers to *how we say something*, or our choice of symbols. **Content** refers to *what we say*, or the meaning of our message. **Use** refers to *why we say something*, or the purpose of our message. When a child's language skills are evaluated, the evaluator observes and describes the child's **form**, **content**, and **use** of language.

1. Language form

Language **form** has several levels: the choice of sounds to use; the choice of words and word forms to use; and the choice of word order to use. When evaluating the child's form, the evaluator looks at two aspects:

- **Phonology.** Phonology refers to the sound system of the language. Every language in

the world has its own sound system, although most languages share many of the same sounds.

These sounds make a difference in meaning. For example, "pat" means something different from "bat." In English, "p" and "b" are two different meaningful sounds. Sounds are combined according to rules for any given language, and the sounds are divided into certain classes. For example, the sounds "p," "b," "t," "d," "k," and "g" are called *stops* because the air stream from the lungs is completely stopped by the tongue or lips, and then released. The sounds "m," "n," and "ng" are called *nasals* because the soft palate allows some of the air stream to enter the nose.

- **Morphology.** Morphology refers to the child's choice of word forms and word endings to express a thought. The young child learns to express various morphological forms in speech, such as be verbs (am, is, are, was, and were), negative words (such as can't and don't), prepositions (such as in, on, and at), plurals, past tense verb forms, etc.
- **Syntax.** Syntax refers to the order that words are put in a sentence. For example, if we want to express the thought of a boy who kicked a ball, we don't say, "The ball kicked the boy." Instead, we say, "The boy kicked the ball." The English language has rules for the order we use to express our ideas with words. Of course, a child cannot tell you the rule itself. But the child uses these rules every time words are combined in a sentence to express a thought. The child learns that using correct forms is the most effective way of getting a meaning across.

2. Language content

Language content refers to the meaning that the child can understand and express. To the child, meaning is of the utmost importance.

The content that the child expresses may belong to the different categories including:

- **Existence**—Refers to existence of an object
- **Nonexistence-disappearance**—Refers to nonexistence or disappearance of an object
- **Recurrence**—Refers to reappearance of an object or event

- **Denial**—Refers to negation of identity, state, or event
- **Possession**—Refers to ownership by different persons
- **Action**—Refers to movement
- **Locative state**—Refers to the location of a person or object
- **Quantity**—Refers to numbers of people or objects
- **Time**—Refers to the passage of time
- **Causality**—Refers to cause-and-effect relationships
- **Mood**—Refers to the attitude of the speaker

The term *semantics* refers to the child's meaning or content. Semantic ability refers to the child's ability to choose words and combine them in such a way as to express the child's intended meaning.

3. Use

This refers to the **reason or purpose** for talking. The uses of communication are sometimes called language functions. The following is a list of common language functions, or uses:

Function	Example
Requesting an object	"Gimme milk."
Requesting an action	"Come here" "Mama!"
Sharing thoughts and feelings	"I love you"
Expressing one's personality or asserting one's self	"I'm a big boy."
Requesting information	"What that?" "Tell me how to fix it."
Exercising the imagination	"You be the daddy and I'll be the mommy."
Relating information to a listener	"Guess what we did at school today? We saw this really neat movie about dinosaurs."

Children are able to do many of these functions without using words. For example, a baby may hold up an empty milk glass and grunt to indicate more milk. However, it is vital that children learn to use words effectively to accomplish these language functions or uses.

What is receptive and expressive language?

Receptive language refers to the skills involved in understanding language. These skills include:

- The ability to hear differences in sounds (phonology), as in understanding that "paw" and "pot" mean two different things.
- Being able to remember what is heard, as in being able to repeat a series of words or follow two-, three-, or four-part directions.
- Understanding vocabulary and concept words (semantics).
- Understanding different grammatical forms (morphology and syntax) such as understanding that "cat" and "cats" mean two different things.

Receptive language also affects language use. For example, the child may have trouble understanding question forms or certain concept words. This causes the child to respond inappropriately to a question, or have trouble staying on the topic of conversation.

Expressive language refers to the skills of being precise, complete and clear when expressing thoughts and feelings, answering questions, relating events, and carrying on a conversation. These skills include:

- Being able to use the sound system (phonology).
- Choosing word forms and word order appropriately (morphology and syntax).
- Choosing the best words to express a thought (semantics).
- Using a wide variety of language functions.

Vocabulary

Articulation—The production of speech sounds.

Articulators—The lips, lower jaw, soft palate, tongue, and larynx which produce meaningful sound by restricting the flow of air.

Consonants—The sounds made by stopping or restricting the outgoing breath.

Content—The aspect of language concerned with meaning.

Expressive language—Includes the skills involved in communicating one's thoughts and feelings to others.

Fluency—The smooth, meaningful flow of speech.

Form—The aspect of language concerned with how we say something; how we choose and combine symbols according to the rules of language.

Morphology—How words are formed and used to convey a message.

Nasals—The sounds "m," "n," and "ng"; made by allowing passage of air through the nose rather than the mouth.

Phonology—How the sounds within a language are combined to convey meaning.

Receptive language—Includes the skills involved in understanding language.

Resonance—The vibration of air in the throat and nasal cavities during speech.

Semantics—The aspect of language concerned with meaning or content.

Stops—The sounds "p," "b," "t," "d," "k," and "g"; made by blocking the air pressure in the mouth and then suddenly releasing it.

Symbol—A sign that represents a person, thing, action, quality, idea, or feeling.

Syntax—How words are put together in a sentence to convey meaning.

Use—The aspect of language concerned with the purpose of our message as we relate to other people.

Vowels—The sounds associated with the letters "a," "e," "i," "o," "u," and "y"; made by allowing air to pass through the nose or mouth without friction or stoppage.

Refer to:

- 2.1 Language Development
- 2.2 Speech Development