

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEECH IN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract: The article explores the relationship between language and speech, the functions of speech in communication, and its role in linguistic research. Particular attention is paid to the cognitive, social, cultural, and educational dimensions of speech. The findings indicate that speech is not merely an expression of language but a dynamic process through which linguistic structures become functional in real-life communication.

Keywords: language, linguistics, communication, discourse, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, verbal interaction, language use.

Language is one of the most significant characteristics distinguishing human beings from other living creatures. It serves as the primary tool for communication, thought, cultural transmission, and social interaction. However, language as an abstract system becomes meaningful only through its practical realization in speech. Speech represents the actual use of language in communication and provides the foundation for linguistic analysis.

Throughout the history of linguistics, scholars have recognized the importance of speech as a source of linguistic data and as a mechanism through which language functions in society. Modern linguistic theories emphasize that language cannot be fully understood without examining speech, since speech reflects the dynamic interaction between linguistic structures and communicative contexts.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the importance of speech in linguistics and to analyze its role in various linguistic disciplines and communicative processes.

Language refers to the abstract system of linguistic signs shared by members of a speech community. Speech, on the other hand, represents the individual and concrete use of that system in actual communication. Several important differences characterize language and speech:

1. Language is abstract, whereas speech is concrete.
2. Language is social, whereas speech is individual.
3. Language is relatively stable, whereas speech is dynamic.
4. Language represents potential communication, whereas speech represents actual communication.

Although these concepts are distinct, they are inseparable. Language exists through speech, and speech is possible only because language provides the necessary linguistic resources. Linguistic research relies heavily on speech as a source of empirical data. Linguists observe and analyze speech in order to identify patterns, structures, and rules governing language use. Speech provides information about:

- Pronunciation patterns;
- Vocabulary usage;
- Grammatical structures;
- Discourse organization;
- Communicative strategies;
- Language variation.

Unlike purely theoretical descriptions, speech data reveal how language functions in real-life situations. Consequently, many modern linguistic studies are based on spoken corpora, recorded conversations, interviews, and natural interactions. Phonetics and phonology are among the linguistic disciplines most directly connected with speech. Phonetics studies the physical properties of speech sounds, including:

- Articulation;
- Acoustic characteristics;
- Auditory perception.

Speech production enables linguists to investigate how sounds are formed and transmitted during communication. Phonology examines how speech sounds function within linguistic systems. Through speech analysis, researchers identify phonemes, stress patterns, intonation structures, and prosodic features.

Without speech, phonetic and phonological investigations would be impossible because these disciplines depend on observable sound production and perception.

Psycholinguistics investigates the mental processes involved in language acquisition, comprehension, and production. Speech plays a crucial role in understanding these cognitive mechanisms.

Psycholinguistic research examines:

1. Speech perception;
2. Speech production;
3. Language acquisition;
4. Verbal memory;
5. Cognitive processing.

Speech production reflects complex interactions between linguistic knowledge and cognitive functions. During communication, speakers must select words, construct grammatical structures, and organize information within a very short period of time. The study of speech errors, pauses, hesitations, and self-corrections provides valuable insights into how language is processed in the human mind.

Furthermore, speech development in children offers important evidence regarding language acquisition and cognitive growth.

Speech occupies a central position in linguistic theory and research because it represents the practical realization of language in communication. It provides essential data for phonetics, phonology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, educational linguistics, and computational linguistics.

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