



# Differences between speech and writing

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper reports about discussion of the differences between speech and writing. We reaffirmed the stand taken traditionally by linguists on the priority of speech over writing, but noted that the relation was a lot more complex than linguists had often acknowledged, and that in general it was highly misleading to present written language simply as a derivative of spoken language. The main problem in identifying differences between speech and writing is that this contrast interacts in complicated ways with other contrasts, so it is hard to find comparable written and spoken texts that do not differ in other respects as well. It is probably misleading to assume that speech is most typically spontaneous, private, etc., and that writing is most typically planned, public, etc., since other permutations of these contrasts are common. We noted a number of structural differences between certain written and spoken genres, but we were unable to decide clearly which of them were predictable consequences of the differences between speaking/hearing and writing/reading, and which of them were just conventional. We disputed the claim that speech is less explicit than writing, and a number of other widely held views - including some which are widely held by linguists. We agreed that the view of language which is espoused by many linguists is unduly influenced by the idea that written language is basic.

**Keywords:**

Summary, main differences between speech and writing, relationship between speech and writing.

1) Differences between writing and speech  
Written and spoken language differ in many ways. However some forms of writing are closer to speech than others, advice versa. Below are some of the ways in which these two forms of language differ:

Writing is usually permanent and written texts can't usually be changed once they have been printed/written out. Speech is usually transient, unless recorded, and speakers can correct themselves and change their utterances as they go along.

A written text can communicate across time and space for as long as the particular language and writing system is still understood. Speech is usually used for immediate interactions.

Written language tends to be more complex and intricate than speech with longer sentences and many subordinate clauses. The punctuation and

layout of written texts also have no spoken equivalent. However, some forms of written language, such as instant messages and email, are closer to spoken language. Spoken language tends to be full of repetitions, incomplete sentences, corrections and interruptions, with the exception of formal speeches and other scripted forms of speech, such as news reports and scripts for plays and films

Writers receive no immediate feedback from their readers, except in computer-based communication. Therefore, they can't rely on context to clarify things so there is more need to explain things clearly and unambiguously than in speech, except in written correspondence between people who know one another well. Speech is usually a dynamic interaction between two or more people. Context and shared

knowledge play a major role, so it is possible to leave much unsaid or indirectly implied.

Writers can make use of punctuation, headings, layout, colors and other graphical effects in their written texts. Such things are not available in speech. Speech can use timing, tone, volume, and timbre to add emotional context.

Written material can be read repeatedly and closely analyzed, and notes can be made on the writing surface. Only recorded speech can be used in this way.

Some grammatical constructions are only used in writing as are some kinds of vocabulary, such as some complex chemical and legal terms. Some types of vocabulary are used only or mainly in speech. These include slang expressions, and tags like you know.

Speaking and Writing in his 1975 Report, A Language for Life, Lord Bullock said, "Not enough account is taken of the fundamental differences that exist between speech and writing." Spoken and written language are obviously different, with different purposes. Written language is permanent: the reader can go back over it again and again if the meaning is not immediately clear. This is not possible with speech, which is fleeting and ephemeral. Writing does not usually involve direct interaction, except for personal letters and perhaps some computer-based communication such as e-mail. Children learn to speak before they learn to read and write. Learning to speak appears to happen naturally within the home, whereas learning to read and write is usually associated with the beginning of formal schooling. Thus, we often assume that written language is more difficult to learn, and we perceive speech as less complex than written language. This is not the case: oral language is just as linguistically complex as written language, but the complexity is of a different kind. The inevitable differences in the structures and use of speech and writing come about because they are produced in very different communicative situations. The greatest differences between speaking and writing are those between formal written texts and very informal conversation. Because it is permanent, writing provides support unities for

more careful organizations and more complex structures.

### **3 critical differences between writing and speech**

#### **1) Repetition**

One of the differences between writing and speech is the use of repetition. In writing, you usually want to avoid being repetitive. Repetitive writing is not very creative and can often cause the reader to become bored. In addition, repetition isn't necessary because of the ability to instantly go back and re-read something if you missed it.

In speech, however, repetition is actually necessary. Audiences don't listen very closely to the exact words you're saying, so you need to repeat your key messages early and often. Just as road signs remind you of where you are when you're driving, repeating key points reminds your audience of where you are when you're presenting.

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#### **2. Complex sentences**

Another one of the differences between writing and speaking is the use of complex sentences. In writing, complex sentences can be necessary for adding the right level of detail and precision. Plus, complex sentences can be made easier to read with the right punctuation.

However, complex sentences are deadly for your speaking. They flatten your delivery, causing you to drone on and on. In addition, speaking requires something fundamental that writing does not: breathing. So, make sure you're giving yourself time to breathe by limiting your use of complex sentences.

#### **3. Word choice**

Finally, writing and speech differ in terms of the importance of word choice. In writing, you usually want to choose your words very carefully, as people can go back and re-read. A well-chosen word can often make or break the point you're making. In speech, the exact words you choose aren't nearly as important as the general point you're trying to make. Just as you remember the melodies of songs, not the specific notes, your audience will remember

your ideas, not your specific words. So, don't obsess over making sure every word you say is absolutely perfect. You can absolutely be both a great writer and a great speaker. But if you want to accomplish this feat, you need to understand the nuances between the two. By being thoughtful about the differences between writing and speaking, you will get much better at both.

### 3) Relationship Between Speech And Writing

Two theories of the relationship between speech and writing are examined. One theory holds that writing is restricted to a one-way relationship with speech—a unidirectional influence from speech to writing. In this theory, writing is derived from speech and is simply a representation of speech. The other theory holds that additional, multidirectional influences are involved in the development of writing. The unidirectional theory focuses on correspondences between speech and writing while the multidirectional theory directs attention to the differences as well as the similarities between speech and writing. These theories have distinctive pedagogical implications. Although early behaviorism may be seen to have offered some support for the unidirectional theory, modern behavior analysis should be seen to support the multidirectional theory.

Fought, 1981; Julia, 1983; Street, 1984).

### Conclusion

On balance, the arguments and evidence presented above favor the multidirectional theory and behavior analytic support of that theory. This support is clearer in contemporary behavior analysis than in early S-R psychology. The if-then simplicity of early S-R theory is no longer an ideal for all behavioral accounts, and any tendency to see the difference and relationship between speech and writing as a simple one-way relationship receives little support now from dispositions toward a Mechanistic World View (which were fairly pervasive at the turn of the century). Instead of an exclusive reliance on paired correspondences between stimulus and response, modern accounts of behavior have

largely shifted to a more systematic, functional analysis of behavior in terms of (1) functional antecedent correspondences to behavior, (2) functional consequences, and (3) the functional contexts of settings. Instead of a general description of behavior in terms of stimulus and response (S-R), behavior is now more appropriately described in terms of antecedents, behavior, consequences, and setting (AB-because-of-C in S).

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