Learning to speak another's language means taking one's place in the human community. It means reaching out to others across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Language is far more than a system to be explained. It is our most important link to the world around us. Language is culture in motion. It is people interacting with people.

Sandra Savignon
CHAPTER THREE
ROLE OF SPEAKING SKILL

3.1 Language: A Skill Subject

If there is any skill in human repertoire of a sufficiently high level to be compared with the skill of language, one might suppose that it is likely to be the skill of being able to 'think'. Language ends up being something that contributes to general cognition. This conclusion does not in itself mean language is a skill comparable with others, but it does leave open to us the possibility of exploring ways in which language shares characteristics with other skilled behavior.

Language may indeed be convincingly characterized in skill terms. One reason why this need cause no surprise is that the predominant models of skills psychology have been applied to language in an explicit way. Similarities are evident because the same descriptive models are used. But this is in itself is significant. Psychologists and linguists have chosen to utilize such models for language, and their choice clearly involves the implication that language may be regarded as a skill; the same models are used because the behaviors are felt to be comparable.
A good proportion of the skills of literature deals with skills that have a large perceptual motor component, like playing tennis, driving a car, operating a lathe etc. This immediately raises the general issue of the extent to which discussion of skills like these are relevant to higher level skills in general, of which language may be one. Holding (1989) is of the opinion that 'extending the idea of skill to include cognitive skills introduces quite different research issues, explanatory concepts, and kinds of methodology'. But it is a generally accepted view that all perceptual motor skills, however 'low level' they may seem, do have a cognitive element to them; Colley and Beech (1989) refer to this element as 'substantial', and Welford (1968) claims that 'all skilled performance is mental in the sense that perception, decision, knowledge and judgment are required ...'. There are thus many features common to both sensory motor and mental skills ...'. Similarly, many skills which we may think of as predominantly cognitive also have a perceptual motor component. Language is a case in point because all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing entail motor actions (involving ears, lips, tongues, glottises, eyes, hands, and various other parts of the body). Factors like these lead to many to focus on similarities rather than differences between the perceptual – motor and the cognitive.
One major apparent difference between motor skills and language is that language production does not seem as related to stimuli as in the other skills. As Herriot (1970) puts it: 'in a skilled task like tracking, the performance is judged by its success or failure in responding to the stimulus situation. In language behavior, language output need not be correlated with stimulus conditions to the same degree'. This is a valid point because so much of the skills of literature deals with models developed to 'handle interaction with the environment' – to respond, that is, to incoming stimuli. But not all non-linguistic skills are closely related to stimuli. Poulton (1957) finds it possible to make a distinction between 'closed' skills. In closed skills, reaction to restricted external stimuli is required; playing a stroke in tennis would be an example. In open skills, there is more unpredictability, less direct reaction to environmental stimuli, and the skill of diving may be an example. Language clearly falls into this open category.

A study of six important concepts of non-linguistic skills is required to comprehend what constitutes a skill before they are applied to language.
Skills are hierarchically organized: The notion that skills are hierarchically organized goes at least as far back as the turn of the century. Hierarchical structuring plays an important role in the learning process. Book (1925) describes how novices learn typing skills. Learners first develop ‘letter habits’ identifying each letter one at a time and finding it develop on the keyboard. Then ‘word habits’ are formed, with some being learned as special routines. Finally, the learner works at the level of the phrase (with ‘phrase habits’), processing text a phrase at a time. This notion of ‘automizing’ lower hierarchical levels (‘letter’ in relation to ‘phrases’) in order to concentrate on the next higher level plays an important role in skill learning.

Skills are goal-directed behavior: The notion of directed action is a central one. Servo-mechanisms contain within them an ‘intention’ – what MacKay (1972) calls the ‘internal “target” criterion’ – and this guides their behavior. To illustrate from the skill of playing tennis, the player will have a hierarchy of aims. One may be a long term goal to win a particular tournament; this will involve a shorter aim of winning a particular game against a particular opponent, and an even shorter one, at a specific moment, to play a fast slow stroke into the back right-hand corner of the court. Moreover, goals should
clearly stand in adequate skill models as the starting point of any
description of performance.

**Skills involve evaluation of data:** It is existence of goal-
directedness that invests with importance the concept of
evaluation: an aim provides something against which to evaluate
the current state of affairs, the input the mechanism receives. To
elaborate the tennis example: players are constantly evaluating
the speed the ball approaches them, its angle, its likely position
of contact with the court were it not to be hit, and so on. If the
player does hit the ball, the stroke is the result of an evaluation
of all these pieces of information mediated by the intention of
playing the winning stroke.

**Skills involve selection:** When we consider the ‘output’ that the
mechanism produces in response to the input it receives mediated
by an aim, the concept of selection becomes important. Skilled
performers are seen as choosing what action to perform from a
choice available to them; in the skilled tennis players, they have
a considerable repertoire of strokes available for them to choose
from in any given situation. Some facts need to be taken into
account about the nature of the choices made in skilled
performance. One is that the number of choices available at any
one time may be very large. For more complex skills like playing tennis, there may be a large selection, while in operating a lathe; the courses of action available at any one time may be highly restricted. A tennis player may respond to a particular input received (an opponent’s stroke) in a large variety of ways; for a skilled player the repertoire of types of stroke to play will be huge. Another important thing is that in many skills choices must be made very quickly, in ‘real time’, the tennis ball crosses the net at speed, and the player must respond in a split second. Selection from the vast repertoire of options must be made with speed.

*Skills involve ‘combinatorial skill’:* An important point that emerges from characterizations of skill is that good performance involves a lot of what may be called ‘combinatorial skill’ — doing more than one thing at the same time. In the game of tennis, the stroke that the player eventually makes is the response to many inputs combined together. Some of the controlling inputs factors are: the speed the ball approaches, its angle, an evaluation of where it will go it is not played at all, where the opponent is placed, what the opponent is expecting.
Skilled behavior is non-stereotyped: Another important aspect of the selections the skilled performer makes is that they are non-stereotyped and this distinguishes skills from habits. Oldfield (1959) uses notions of choice and versatility to make the distinction: 'habits demand conformity to a prescribed, standard sequence of motor acts, while in skilled behavior the same act is, strictly speaking never repeated ... in a skill the effectiveness of the behavior is dependent upon the absence of stereotyping. The unique nature of a skilled action is indeed an essential part of what distinguishes it from a stereotyped habit. Skill demands flexible responses, not just a fixed set of actions.

3.1.1 Characteristics of language as skill
We shall consider these influences by taking a look at each of the above six characteristics of skilled behavior, and show how they may be said to apply to language. The aim is to produce convincing argument that a view of language as skill is persuasive, insightful, and useful for language teaching.

Language is hierarchically organized: It would not be an exaggeration to state that a glance at the index of any introductory textbook to the study of language is likely to find an entry under ‘hierarchy’, with the associated discussion revealing
Language is goal-directed behavior: MacKay's (1972) concern is in fact to differentiate true communication from what he calls communication-like activity – activity which informs, but where the intention to communicate is lacking. His example of the latter is a spotty face, which may inform of the presence of measles, but is not an act of communication. Hence 'directed action' is seen virtually as a defining characteristic of communication.
systems, including language. Linguists should therefore study language in relation to its uses. 'The more', Halliday says (1973) 'we are able to relate the options in grammatical systems to meaning potential ... the more insight we shall gain into the nature of the language system'.

Language involves evaluation of data: Psycholinguists have long realized that the processes of listening and reading, once referred to as the 'passive' skills, are very far from being so. The language receiver (listener/reader) is involved in active processing of input, one important of which is evaluative. In some models of listening, the evaluative elements relates to the listener's attempts to discern the speaker's intentions. People listen for a purpose and it is this purpose that drives the understanding process. In models where listener/reader purpose is central, part of the evaluative element will involve searching for what Cherry (1957) calls 'pragmatic information'. This is not equivalent to semantic information; it is that part of the total information conveyed which contributes to the information 'required' by the speaker. It is, in short, information which the listener/reader wants to receive. In listening and reading with some clearly identifiable purpose - reading a text for some specific information, for example - this process and the
evaluation it implies is obvious. A further part of the evaluation process involved in listening and reading involves evaluating input in the light of knowledge of the world and knowledge about the speaker/writer. The above observations relate to language reception (listening/reading), but language production (speaking/writing) also involves evaluation, as the producer evaluates feedback to his own output in order to gauge its effectiveness and appropriateness.

Language involves selection: For MacKay (1972) it is the concept of 'selection from a repertoire' that provides the central link between communication engineering and the study of biological communication. The concepts of doubt and choice (implying selection) have found a place in the work of communication-minded linguists. Cherry (1957) indicates how the notions of doubt and selection are linked: 'Information', he says 'can be received only when there is doubt, doubt implies the existence of alternatives – where choice, selection or discrimination is called for'. Language use involves, in Halliday's words, 'a simultaneous selection from among a large number of interrelated options.
Language behavior involves ‘combinatorial skill’: Language performance is a clear example of the term ‘doing more than one thing at the same time’. It is Halliday who says that ‘speech acts involve planning that is continuous and simultaneous in respect to all the functions of language’. When one responds to question, one’s reply must conform to the syntax of the language, to its phonology and its semantics. The response must be ‘well formed’ in all these respects. It must also be appropriate to the speakers intention – saying what the speaker wants it to say. It must also be appropriate to what has been asked, conforming to rules and conventions of cohesion and coherence. Aristotle’s view of rhetoric as ‘the study of how to express oneself correctly and effectively, bearing in mind the nature of the language we use, the subject we are speaking or writing about, the kind of audience we have in view ... and the purpose, which last is the main determinant’ focuses on the same point. Johnson (1983a) links this statement with the communicative teaching of writing, and uses it as the basis for a consideration of the levels on which appropriateness must be achieved.
Language behavior is non-stereotyped: According to Oldfield's terms here is an 'absence of stereotyping' in the choices which are made in skilled performances. In Oldfield's characterization of skilled behavior, an action is 'strictly speaking never repeated'. In Chomsky (1964) the formulation is that 'except for a ridiculously small number (e.g., conventionalised greetings, etc. ...) all actual sentences are of a probability so low as to be effectively zero'. Though of course in both the skill and the
linguistic case there are 'determinate' underlying principles, what is evident is rule-governed creativity.

All the elements discussed so far in relation to language, results in a characterization of language production very close to Craik’s 'kind of calculating machine capable of receiving different inputs and producing an output which is derived from the various input parameters acting in concert.' (Welford 1970). To sum up, language is goal-directed, hierarchically organized, non-stereotyped behaviors. From the environment, the performer receives information along various parameters. The performer’s response is selected form a large repertoire of possible responses. It must be appropriate along all the relevant parameters and in many cases must be executed speedily.

3.2 Language Learning and Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is the process of learning a native or a second language. The acquisition of native languages is studied primarily by developmental psychologists and psycholinguists. Although how children learn to speak is not perfectly understood, most explanations involve both the observation that children copy what they hear and the inference that human beings have a natural aptitude for understanding grammar. While children
usually learn the sounds and vocabulary of their native language through imitation, grammar is seldom taught to them explicitly; that they nonetheless rapidly acquire the ability to speak grammatically supports the theory advanced by Noam Chomsky and other proponents of transformational grammar. According to this view, children are able to learn the "superficial" grammar of a particular language because all intelligible languages are founded on a "deep structure" of grammatical rules that are universal and that correspond to an innate capacity of the human brain. Stages in the acquisition of a native language can be measured by the increasing complexity and originality of a child's utterances. Children at first may over generalize grammatical rules and say, for example, *goed* (meaning *went*), a form they are unlikely to have heard, suggesting that they have intuited or deduced complex grammatical rules (here, how to conjugate regular verbs) and failed only to learn exceptions that cannot be predicted from a knowledge of the grammar alone. The acquisition of second or foreign languages is studied primarily by applied linguists. People learning a second language pass through some of the same stages, including overgeneralization, as do children learning their native language. However, people rarely become as fluent in a second language as in their native tongue. Some linguists see the earliest years of childhood as a critical
period, after which the brain loses much of its facility for assimilating new languages. Most traditional methods for learning a second language involve some systematic approach to the analysis and comprehension of grammar as well as to the memorization of vocabulary. The cognitive approach, increasingly favored by experts in language acquisition, emphasizes extemporaneous conversation, immersion, and other techniques intended to simulate the environment in which most people acquire their native language as children.

Almost every human child succeeds in learning language. As a result, people often tend to take the process of language learning for granted. To many, language seems like a basic instinct, as simple as breathing or blinking. But language is not simple at all; in fact it is the most complex skill that a human being will ever master. That nearly all people succeed in learning this complex skill demonstrates how well language has adapted to human nature. In a very real sense, language is the complete expression of what it means to be human.

Linguists in the tradition of Noam Chomsky tend to think of language as having a universal core from which individual languages select out a particular configuration of features, parameters, and settings. As a result, they see language as an
instinct that is driven by specifically human evolutionary adaptations. In their view, language resides in a unique mental organ that has been given as a "special gift" to the human species. This mental organ contains rules, constraints, and other structures that can be specified by linguistic analysis.

Psychologists and those linguists who reject the Chomskyan approach often view language learning from a very different perspective. To the psychologist, language acquisition is a window on the operation of the human mind. The patterns of language emerge not from a unique instinct but from the operation of general processes of evolution and cognition. For researchers who accept this emergent approach, the goal of language acquisition studies is to understand how regularities in linguistic form emerge from the operation of low-level physical, neural, and social processes. Before considering the current state of the dialogue between the view of language as a hard-wired instinct and the view of language as an emergent process, it will be useful to review a few basic facts about the shape of language acquisition and some of the methods that are used to study it.
3.2.1 Distinction between language acquisition and language learning

There is an important distinction made by linguists between language acquisition and language learning. Children acquire language through a subconscious process during which they are unaware of grammatical rules. This is similar to the way they acquire their first language. They get a feel for what is and what is not correct. In order to acquire language, the learner needs a source of natural communication. The emphasis is on the text of the communication and not on the form. Young students who are in the process of acquiring English get plenty of "on the jobs" practice. They readily acquire the language to communicate with classmates.

Language learning, on the other hand, is not communicative. It is the result of direct instruction in the rules of language. And it certainly is not an age-appropriate activity for your young learners. In language learning, students have conscious knowledge of the new language and can talk about that knowledge. They can fill in the blanks on a grammar page. Research has shown, however, that knowing grammar rules does not necessarily result in good speaking or writing. A student who has memorized the rules of the language may be able to succeed
on a standardized test of English language but may not be able to speak or write correctly.

Various researchers opine differently while defining the terms language acquisition and language learning. One kind of opinion is that, language acquisition is mainly attributed to acquiring the language sub-consciously from the childhood due to the particular language environment. Krashen (1977) describes a monitor model of second language performances in which 'acquisition' is distinguished from 'learning'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACQUISITION</th>
<th>LEARNING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>implicit, subconscious</td>
<td>explicit, conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal situations</td>
<td>formal situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses grammatical 'feel'</td>
<td>uses grammatical rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depends on attitude</td>
<td>depends on aptitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stable order of acquisition</td>
<td>simple to complex order of learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig: 3.3. (Adapted from Krashen, 1982)

Acquisition arises as the result of processes of creative constructions by which the learner internalizes the rules of the second language (L2) subconsciously. Krashen says that
acquisition takes place ‘naturally’ and is not amenable to instruction. Contrary to this, ‘learning’ is a conscious process that results from formal study and which can be, therefore, influenced by that study. Krashen argues that adults as well as children are capable of both acquiring and learning a second language and that both processes can occur inside and outside the classroom (1976). The knowledge that is derived from acquisition is used somewhat differently from that derived from learning, that is, all the learners’ use of the second language—spoken or written— is initiated by means of acquired knowledge, but in some contexts of use learnt knowledge may be called upon to monitor the utterances that are initiated from the store of acquired knowledge. Thus, for instance, in spontaneous conversation it is learner’s acquired knowledge that governs language use, but in written examination all productions are all likely to be inspected and monitored by reference to learnt knowledge.

During the process of sub-conscious acquisition, the learners usually may not have grammatical competence but there can be communicative competence to a certain extent as far as language use is concerned. While learning the language, usually it is in a controlled situation where formal learning takes place, by
utilizing the formal learning materials. In this case there can be grammatical competence but the learners need not have communicative competence.

**Combined model of acquisition and production**

![Diagram of the Combined model of acquisition and production](image)

*Fig: 3.4. The Input Hypothesis Model of L2 learning and production (adapted from Krashen, 1982, pp. 16 and 32; and Gregg, 1984)*

Ellis (1986) is of the opinion that second language acquisition and second language learning are not two different processes as contrasted sometimes. He says that the term acquisition is used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure, whereas the term learning is used to refer to the conscious study of second language. Even in the present days beginning from the post war years, there has been a strong assumption by his/her first language. It is assumed that where there were differences between first language and second language, the learner's first
language knowledge would interfere with the second language and where the first language and second language were similar the first language would actively aid the second language learning. The conditions of learning are not the same in the case of language acquisition and language learning. In the same bilingual situation a child learns more effectively than an adult. Social pressures on children once they enter the school force them to learn a second language whereas such a pressure on adults is rarely as intense as on children.

3.2.2 Factors determining language learning and language acquisition

Further, Wilkins (1974) feels that the amount of exposure to language determines the contrast between language learning and language acquisition situations. It would certainly take a long time for a language learner to reach a reasonable degree of proficiency. There will be obvious difference in the pronunciation of the older and younger learners. The contrast between language learning and acquisition mainly depends on the amount of exposure to language. In the case of older learners their expectations of linguistics rules should be made explicit to them. If not it may hinder their learning, making the linguistic generalizations explicit will be detrimental to language learning, if it is considered as a dominant language learning activity. On
the whole the nature of activities in which people engage themselves will determine their learning. To have mastery over a second language is to have mastery of the finite system by which linguistic creativity is achieved. A descriptive grammar of the language conventionally attempts to set out the limited rules governing the construction of sentences. It is the descriptive function of a grammar that contributes to the understanding of the language. Languages possess grammatical systems to express the kinds of meanings which are themselves the whole purpose of communication. The grammatical devices of a language are the capacity to express meaning that is the end. Grammatical meanings vary from language to language as the grammatical devices. In learning mastery of the forms is equally important to the mastery of the meanings they convey. The grammatical systems contribute a great deal to the communicative content of utterances. But it is not all that is needed for the successful communication significance linguistic choices are made according to the expression of language in writing or speaking. It is not possible to use everything in speech to write and vice-versa. Spoken utterances are sometime not grammatical since the speaker changes his utterances several times. The ability to communicate is a greater part of the learner language ability.
Grammatical and communicative competence is needed to understand and use any language.

Vocabulary of a language is as important as the mastery of its grammar. Lexical meaning as the grammatical meaning of a grammatical system is the product of the words place in the lexical system. It is a characteristic of certain languages that some combinations of words are not acceptable or are semantically incompatible. The learning of the potential collacability of lexical items probably takes place only through considerable exposure to the language.

Languages are usually expressed through writing or speaking. Writings are based on phonological system which is learnt through the mastery of the orthographic conventions of the target language. Speech is transmitted as a continuum of sound with occasional pauses, but it is perceived by the hearer as a succession of individuals. A learner has to acquire a pronunciation which is accurate enough for the distinctive sound to be distinctive from one another.

In the case of language learning all language activity is distinct from language using. The learner is quite aware that he has been
brought together with others for the purpose of learning a language. They focus their attention more on linguistic forms they are trying to use than on the content they are attempting to communicate. They should be able to produce and receive communication in the language which would be far more rewarding to the language learners.

Learning a first language is, in Halliday’s phrase, ‘learning how to mean’ – discovering that language is used for relating to other people and for communicating ideas. Language also requires the ability to recognize that other people have points of view. People learning a second language already know how to mean and know that other people have minds of their own. L2 learning is inevitably different from in this respect from L1 learning. L2 learners are different form different from children learning a first language since there is already one language present in their minds. However strong the similarities may be between L1 acquisition and L2 learning, the presence of the first language is the inescapable difference in L2 learning. However peculiar and limited they may be, learners’ sentences come from learners’ own language systems; their speech shows rules and patterns of their own. At each stage learners have their own language systems. The nature of these learner systems may be very different from
that of the target language. Even if they are idiosyncratic and constantly changing, they are nonetheless systematic. The starting for Second Language Acquisition research is the learner's own language system. This can be called the 'independent language assumption': learners are not willfully distorting the native system but are inventing a system of their own.

In Vivian Cook's view, we have the user's knowledge of their first language; on the other, their interlanguage in the second language. But both these languages coexist in the same mind; one person knows both languages. Hence, Vivian Cook feels a name is needed to refer to the overall knowledge that combines both the first language and the L2 interlanguage, and so she calls it 'multi-competence'.
3.2.3 Ways to acquire a second language

Language skills, like any other skills can be acquired only through practice. In the case of the mother tongue the child gets sufficient scope for this practice in his daily environment. He uses the language at home and with everyone with whom he communicates. He also has the strongest motivation to learn the language, for if he cannot express himself in his mother tongue, some of his basic needs are likely to remain unfulfilled. And it is remarkable that the child practices a highly complex code. Similarly, he is taught the language by his teachers, parents and friends without making any deliberate effort. They unconsciously supply him with the models for imitation and expression for formulation of his ad hoc rules about the language. As it is
obvious that his parents, friends and others contribute a lot to promote his language, that is, his mother tongue. It is equally possible that, if his parents are well-educated, speaking English at home and his friends also come from similar backgrounds, he is automatically put into a situation or environment where he gets more access to the English sounds and forms, and consequently is able to make a better use of his second language as opposed to those who are not brought up in such an environment.

If English happens to be the second language, which is considered as a foreign language, then these natural resources are not available to the learner. Unlike the mother tongue, a second language is learnt deliberately, usually in the formal classroom setting. Therefore, the classroom activities must provide sufficient motivation and scope for practicing the language. Further, the language materials presented for practice have to be carefully selected to highlight the regularities of the language, so that students can make their own ad hoc rules.

A child acquires his first language at a very young age, and when he acquires it, its forms and meanings, their associations get impressed on his mind, and they become part of his reflex actions. Whenever there is a need to express any idea whether it
is simple or complex, he uses the appropriate forms without any conscious thought. But with the second language it is quite different. He has not only learnt how this verbal signaling system works out, but also acquired a particular system, that is, his native language, which he can use with ease. Hence, when he has to express something in the second language, he has to keep the habits of the first language in check in order to produce the new sounds and structures. Since his ears have become so accustomed to his native language sounds that he does not easily distinguish the difference between the sounds of the two languages, and, as a result, is unable to produce distinctive sounds of the second language. This compels him to replace the sounds of the second language with the similar sounds of his native language. In psychological terms, this phenomenon is known as 'transfer' which may be either positive or negative. In matters where the two languages do not differ, the habits of the first language will help in the learning of the second language which is called 'positive transfer'. But in areas where the two languages differ, the learner will have to overcome the pull of his native language in order to produce the sounds and the structures of the language. This is called 'negative transfer or interference'. In the second language the pull is so great that it is almost impossible for a second language learner to acquire the pronunciation of the
native speakers of the language. Linguists explain interference phenomena in terms of the structural differences between the languages. Interference may occur at any level—phonological, morphological or syntactic. The relative skills of the second language learner are evaluated according to the quantity of interference manifested in their language. A second language learner who evidences a great amount of interference in one or more of his languages is rated as having little skill.

The major difference between learning native and a second or foreign language lies in the simple fact that when the learner learns the second language, he will already have learnt either consciously or subconsciously a set of rules namely the set that governs the system of the native language. In bilingual communities, interference invariably results in structural changes in at least in one of the languages, and sometimes in both. These changes commonly called diffusion or borrowing occur when the speakers of one of the languages accept any manifestations of interference as appropriate for regular use in the other language. Suitably motivated adults are capable of mastering to perfection the second language. Bilingual first language acquisition means that two languages are learned in parallel. Any two language systems, irrespective of their differences have some features in
common, that is, many of their words may have equivalents in the other language. It is therefore, conceivable that the learners might have developed one system with a number of variable components between which he may switch over at will. Since all human languages have many of the same functions, the bilingual often identifies the sounds, lexical items, syntactic structures and meanings of one of his languages with equivalent units in his other language.

There are some aspects of language that seem so fundamental that humans hardly need to learn them. Nevertheless, the specific structures examined by linguistic theory involve only a small set of core grammatical features. When looking more generally at the full shape of the systems of lexicon, phonology, pragmatics, and discourse, much greater individual variation in terms of overall language proficiency appear. To explain these differences, it is necessary to view language learning as emerging from multiple sources of support. One source of support is the universal concept all humans have about what language can be. A second source of support is input from parents and peers. This input is most effective when it directly elaborates or expands on things the child has already said. A third source of support is the brain itself. Through elaborate connections among auditory, vocal,
relational, and memory areas, humans are able to store linguistic patterns and experiences for later processing. A fourth source of support is the generalizations that people produce when they systematize and extend language patterns. Recognizing that English verbs tend to produce their past tense by adding the suffix -ed, children can produce over-generalizations such as "goed" or "runned." Although these overgeneralizations are errors, they represent the productive use of linguistic creativity.

Because language is based on such a wide variety of alternative cognitive skills, children can often compensate for deficits in one area by emphasizing their skills in another area. The case of Helen Keller is perhaps the best such example of compensation. Although Keller had lost both her hearing and her vision, she was able to learn words by observing how her guardian traced out patterns of letters in her hand. In this way, even when some of the normal supports are removed, children can still learn language. The basic uses of language are heavily over-determined by this rich system of multiple supports. As a child moves away from the basic uses of language into the more refined areas of literacy and specific genres, progress can slow. In these later periods, language is still supported by multiple sources, but each of the supports grows weaker, and progress toward the full competency required in the modern workplace is less inevitable.
Hatch concludes (1978) that recent studies of second language acquisition 'show overall similarities in acquisition strategies whether the learner is child or adult'. But she also points out that 'the studies show considerable variation among learners at one age group and also across the age range'. McLaughlin (1978) points out some of the advantages that adults bring to bear on language-learning tasks. They can, for example, use more memorization strategies so that they can retain input longer; they have a greater experience of the resources of their first language, and can have recourse to the lexicon as a means of guessing items in the new language; they process information more quickly; they have much greater knowledge of the world. On the other hand, he points out that children too make use of these resources as far as they can, and there is enough evidence of similarities between adult and child second language production to suggest that differences between these two groups are not fundamental. Between learners themselves, however, there may be variation in strategy, both in the classroom and in natural settings with children. Linguists, anthropologists, sociolinguists, psycholinguists, and sociologists are increasingly concerned with the operation of language in social relationships, and with the possible interaction between linguistic form and social situation. A concern for such interaction has direct implications for a
definition of the nature of language acquisition and probably for second language development.

Knowing another language may mean getting a job; a chance to get educated; the ability to take a fuller part in the life of one's own country or the opportunity to emigrate to another; an expansion of one's literary and cultural horizons; the expression of one's political opinions or religious beliefs. A second language affects people's careers and possible futures, their lives and their very identities. In a world where probably more people speak two languages than one, the acquisition and use of second languages are vital to the everyday lives of millions. Helping people acquire second languages more effectively is an important task for the twenty-first century. A concern for such interaction has direct implications for a definition of the nature of language acquisition and probably for second language development.

3.3 Speaking: A Complex Skill

Teaching a skill at the exclusion of other skills is impossible because language is an integrative activity and it is wise to teach language skills integratively, more than one skill at a time. The student must be trained adequately in all the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In order to
achieve communicative competence, it is important that the speech communicator should be well-versed in all the four skills. Listening and reading can be termed as receptive skills, whereas speaking and writing can be termed as productive skills. Since there is close correlation between these four skills, if a person fails to have competence in one skill, it will have its impact on the development of other skills. As the scholar's primary focus is on speaking skills, the emphasis is on the pivotal role speaking skills plays in facilitating uninterrupted communication.

We describe the four traditional skills of language use (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in terms of their direction and...
modality. Language generated by the learner (in speech or writing) is productive, and language directed at the learner (in reading or listening) is receptive (Savignon, 1991). Modality refers to the medium of the message (aural/oral or written). Thus, speaking is the productive aural/oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving but it is not completely unpredictable.

3.3.1 Difference between spoken and written language

Spoken language and written language differ in many important ways. Spoken language is received auditorially, whereas written language is received visually. As a result, the spoken message is temporary and its reception by the learner is usually immediate. In contrast, written language is permanent, and reception by the learner typically occurs some time after the text was generated (sometimes even centuries later). Meaning in spoken language is conveyed in part through the supra-segmental phonemes (including rhythm, stress, and intonation), whereas punctuation marks and type fonts convey such information in writing. For L2 learners, speaking the target can be particularly difficult
because, unlike reading or writing, speaking happens in "real time." That is, the person we are talking to (the interlocutor) is listening and waiting to take his or her own turn to speak. Spoken English "is almost always accomplished via interaction with at least one other speaker. This means that a variety of demands are in place at once: monitoring and understanding the other speaker(s), thinking about one's own contribution, producing its effect, and so on" (Lazaraton, 2001, p. 103). In addition, except in recorded speech, verbal interaction typically involves immediate feedback from one's interlocutor, whereas feedback to the authors of written texts may be delayed or nonexistent.

Finally, because spoken communication occurs in real time, the opportunities to plan and edit output are limited, whereas in most written communication, the message originator has time for planning, editing, and revision. Except when audio taping a letter or dictating a memo, when we speak we cannot edit and revise what we wish to say, as we usually can in writing. Being able to speak the target language is clearly important for L2 learners in order to get their needs met. However, speaking is also significant in terms of ongoing language acquisition. By communicating orally with others in English, L2 learners can experience modified interaction—"that interaction which is
altered in some way (either linguistically or conversationally) to facilitate comprehension of the intended message" (Doughty & Pica, 1986). Such modifications occur through repetition of the spoken message as well as through three types of conversational moves: (a) *clarification requests*, when one interlocutor does not entirely comprehend the meaning and asks for clarification, (b) *confirmation checks*, when the listener believes he or she has understood, but would like to make sure, and (c) *comprehension checks*, in which the speaker wants to be certain that the listener has understood. These modifications are important because in both research and theory, such modified interaction is claimed to make input comprehensible to learners and to lead ultimately to successful classroom second language acquisition. In discussing current second-language acquisition research, Swain (2000) states that generating output (i.e., speaking or writing) “pushes learners to process language more deeply—with more mental effort—than does input” (via listening and reading; p. 99). Swain suggests that output promotes noticing: “Learners may notice that they do not know how to express precisely the meaning they wish to convey at the very moment of attempting to produce it”. It is through interaction that learners confront the gaps in their knowledge and skills. Speaking is thus both the product and the process of second language acquisition.
As Florez (1999) notes, "Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary . . . but also that they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language" (pp. 1–2).

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations (e.g., declining an invitation or requesting time off from work), can be identified and charted (Burns & Joyce, 1997). For example, when a salesperson asks "May I help you?" the expected discourse sequence includes a statement of need, response to the need, offer of appreciation, acknowledgement of the appreciation, and a leave-taking exchange. Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary ("linguistic competence"),
but also that they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language ("sociolinguistic competence"). Finally, speech has its own skills, structures, and conventions different from written language (Burns & Joyce, 1997; Carter & McCarthy, 1995; Cohen, 1996). A good speaker synthesizes this array of skills and knowledge to succeed in a given speech act.

Speech is a complex skill that provides the necessary means of reciprocal communication with others. Macmurray (1961) clearly states: "Long before the child learns to speak, he is able to communicate, meaningfully and intentionally, with his mother." When and why speech becomes genuinely symbolic is the primary issue. Macmurray claims that cognition and speech arise in contexts of motivated interaction with others in order to establish the personal order. Speaking is perhaps the most fundamental of human skills, and because we do it constantly, we do not often stop to examine the processes involved. Yet having a simple conversation is anything but a simple process – particularly if someone is speaking a new language.

3.3.2 Speaking – A productive skill

Speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode. It, like the other skills, is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words.
There are three kinds of speaking situations in which we find ourselves:

- interactive,
- partially interactive, and
- non-interactive.

Interactive speaking situations include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately listening and speaking, and in which we have a chance to ask for clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner. Some speaking situations are partially interactive, such as when giving a speech to a live audience, where the convention is that the audience does not interrupt the speech. The speaker nevertheless can see the audience and judge from the expressions on their faces and body language whether or not he or she is being understood. Some few speaking situations may be totally non-interactive, such as when recording a speech for a radio broadcast.

Communicative and whole language instructional approaches promote integration of speaking, listening, reading and writing in ways that reflect natural language use. But opportunities for speaking and
listening require structure and planning if they are to support language development.

Some of the micro-skills involved in speaking are mentioned below. The speaker has to:

- pronounce the distinctive sounds of a language clearly enough so that people can distinguish them. This includes making tonal distinctions.
- use stress and rhythmic patterns, and intonation patterns of the language clearly enough so that people can understand what is said.
- use the correct forms of words. This may mean, for example, changes in the tense, case, or gender.
- put words together in correct word order.
- use vocabulary appropriately.
- use the register or language variety that is appropriate to the situation and the relationship to the conversation partner.
- make clear to the listener the main sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, by whatever means the language uses.
- make the main ideas stand out from supporting ideas or information.
- make the discourse hang together so that people can follow what you are saying
A speaker's skills and speech habits have an impact on the success of any exchange (Van Duzer, 1997). Speakers must be able to anticipate and then produce the expected patterns of specific discourse situations. They must also manage discrete elements such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting (Burns & Joyce, 1997). For example, a learner involved in the exchange with the salesperson described previously must know the usual pattern that such an interaction follows and access that knowledge as the exchange progresses. The learner must also choose the correct vocabulary to describe the item sought, rephrase or emphasize words to clarify the description if the clerk does not understand, and use appropriate facial expressions to indicate satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service. Other skills and knowledge that instruction might address include the following:

- producing the sounds, stress patterns, rhythmic structures, and intonations of the language;
- using grammar structures accurately;
- assessing characteristics of the target audience, including shared knowledge or shared points of reference, status and power relations of participants, interest levels, or differences in perspectives;
• selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience, the topic being discussed, and the setting in which the speech act occurs;

• applying strategies to enhance comprehensibility, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or checking for listener comprehension;

• using gestures or body language; and

• paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener comprehension and involvement (Brown, 1994)

The importance of speech has been reinforced by many linguists who claim that speech is the primary form of language and that writing depends on speech. Few teaching methods in the twentieth century saw speech and writing as equally important.

Many teachers worldwide have to teach mainly grammar and vocabulary because these areas are tested in examinations. It is obvious that speaking is a neglected language skill in classrooms. Students may have a good knowledge of grammar and a wide vocabulary; they can use this knowledge to pass examinations, but they find it more difficult to speak English outside the classrooms.
Learning to speak English has become imperative and it has become all the more imperative for teachers to teach speaking. More and more educators, governments, ministries of education and employers need people who can speak English well. Companies and organizations want staff who can speak English in order to communicate within the international marketplace. Students who can speak English well may have a greater chance of further education, of finding employment and gaining promotion.

Speaking English well also helps students to access up-to-date information in fields including science, technology and health. By learning to speak English well, students gain a valuable skill which can be useful in their lives and contribute to their community and country. There are immense benefits to practice speaking during a lesson. Speaking activities can reinforce the learning of new vocabulary, grammar or functional languages. Moreover, speaking activities also give students the chance to use the new language they are learning. Finally, speaking activities give more advanced students the chance to experience with the language they already know in different situations and on different topics.
Speaking is the key to communication. By considering what good speakers do, what speaking tasks can be used in class, and what specific needs learners report, teachers can help learners improve their speaking and overall oral competency. The application of an integrating approach can be implemented in the classroom for the development of communicative skills, wherein the four skills in the acquisition of knowledge of a language can be taught in coherent way, and practiced together, with a distinction of the importance of one upon the other.

**Conclusion**

To sum up, language may indeed be convincingly characterized in skill terms. Considering language as skill is persuasive, insightful and useful for language teaching. The fourth chapter focuses on the current level of oral competence in English among postgraduate students, the research process, and the speaking tests administered by the scholar in the classroom to gauge their proficiency level. The next chapter depicts graphically the performance of the students coupled with an analysis of their performance. The following chapter also highlights the problems faced by the students and the remedial measures.