

Language and Language Skills

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What is Language?

Language is the divine gift of god. It is language that distinguishes man from animals. Language is man's finest asset. Language does mean a collection of words strung together in sentences but each word having a separate identity and meaning. In fact, the words are brought together in special ways to give a highly systematic order from which we get a meaning. Language is not random behaviour but is systematic where certain orderings are accepted as having prescribed meanings. For example, "The sun is shining" is not the same as "Is the sun shining". The following definitions will make the meaning of language more clear-

- (1) According to **Block & Trager**- *"A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group operates."*
- (2) According to **Allen**- *"Language is a means of communicating thoughts."*
- (3) According to **O. Jespersen**- *"Language is a set of human habits, the purpose of which is to give expression to thoughts and feelings."*
- (4) According to **Webster**- *"Language is a audible, articulate human speech as produced by the action of the tongue and adjacent vocal organs."*

According to all these definitions, it becomes clear that language is used to give expression to thoughts and feelings of a social group.

English Language

English is also a language used to give expression to thoughts and feelings of a social group. But it is a foreign language for Indians.

Language as Skill

Language is essentially a skill. It is not a content-based subject like-Science, Social Studies, Commerce, Mathematics, etc., which aim is to imparting information and fill the human mind with knowledge. Since language is a skill, it naturally comes under psychomotor domain. A skill may be called the ability to do something well. Swimming, playing, etc. are skills which people

perform after acquiring them. Knowing about these things is an intellectual exercise (cognition) and using or doing them is a skill (action). Language is a complex skill involving four sub-skills, which are as follows-

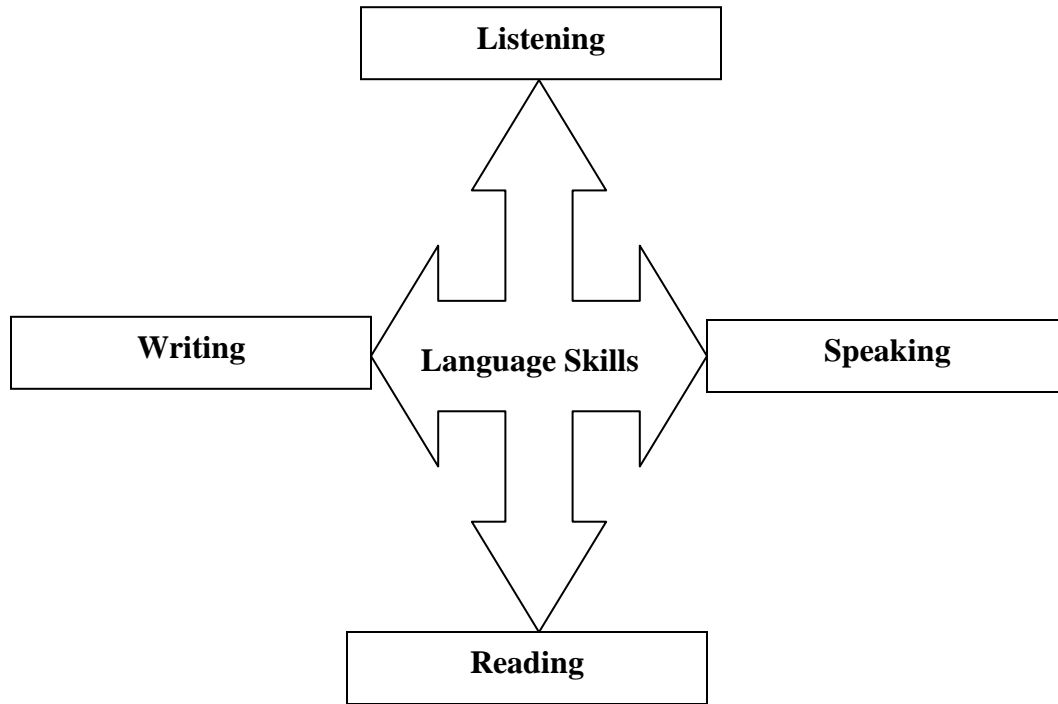


Figure-1: Types of Language Skills

Classification of Language Skills

The four and fundamental language skills, viz. LSRW (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) may be further classified into two parts-

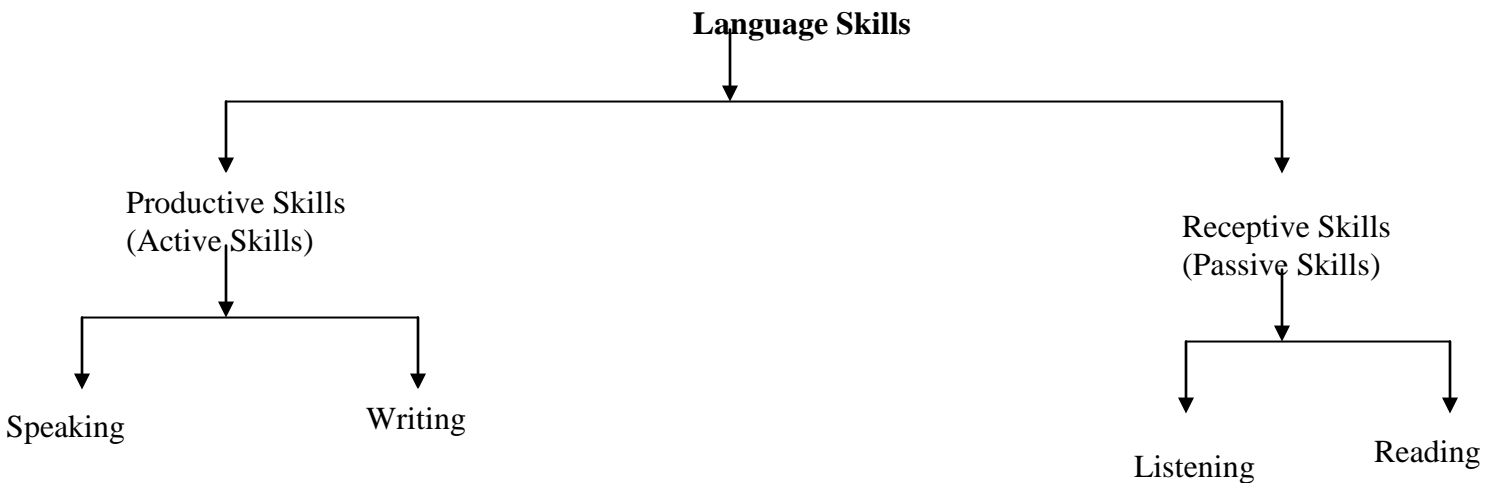
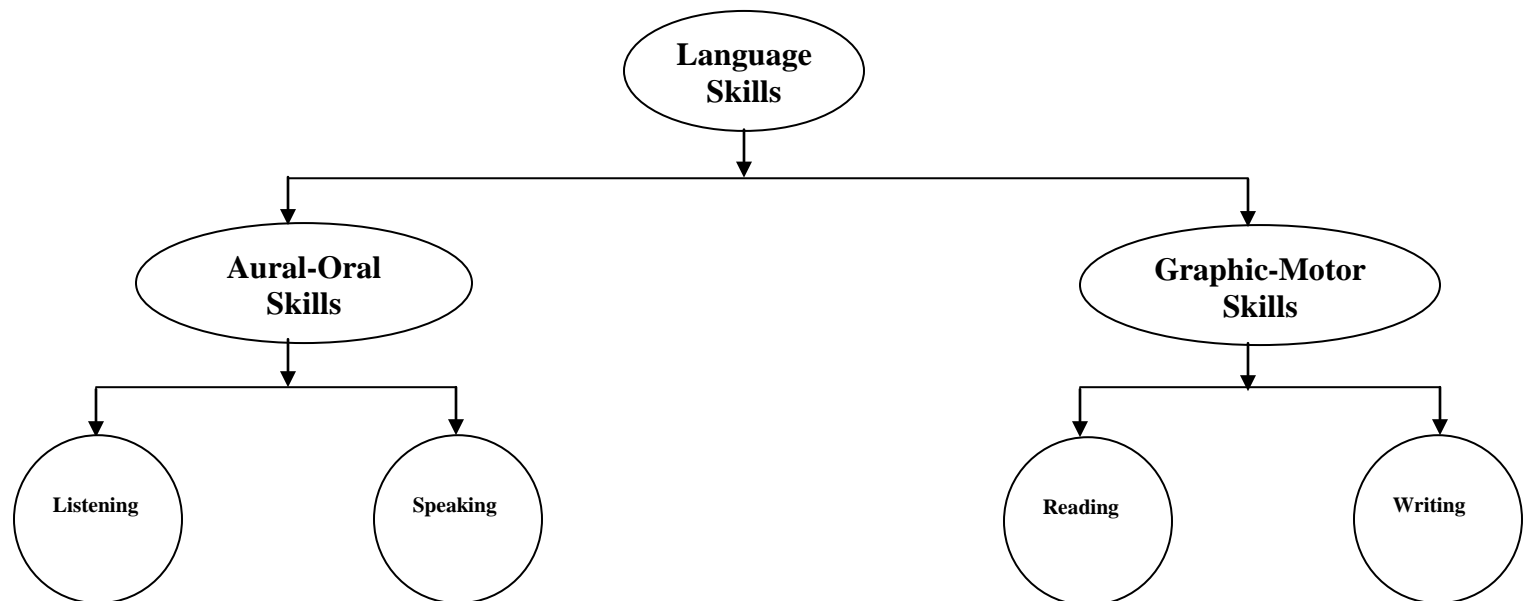


Figure-2: Classification of Language Skills

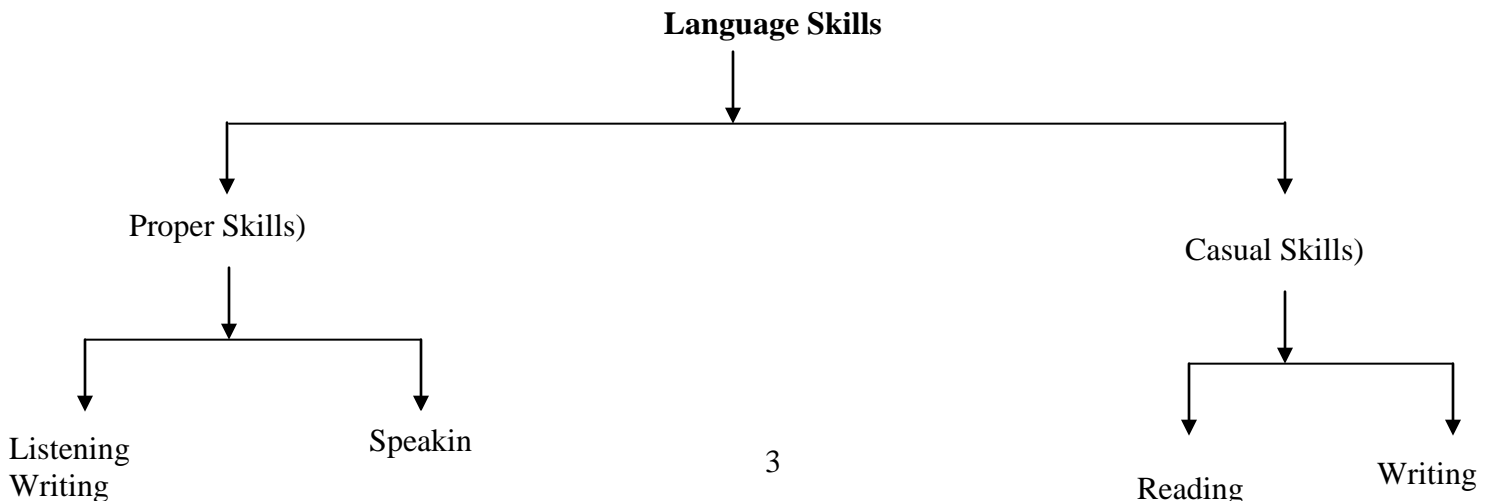
Speaking and writing are called productive skills because while using these skills a learner/user is not only active but also produces sounds in speaking and symbols (letters, etc.) in writing, on the other hand, listening and reading are considered receptive skills because here a learner is generally passive and receives information either through listening or reading. The following table gives a better idea of these skills-

Language Skills	Oral	Written
Receptive	Listening	Reading
Productive	Speaking	Writing

The same idea can be shown through a flow chart as given below-



We may categorize these four language skills into two other ways-



Forms of Language:

A language normally proceeds from the spoken language to the written language. So it has two forms-

- (a) Spoken Language
- (b) Written Language

Language is a System of Systems:

A language is a system. Language is a complex whole like the human body. The system of language functions through sounds, words and structure. These are integrated with one another and constitute the complex whole which is language. A language is a system of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary which themselves are systems. The systems are-

(1) Phonology

The sound system of a language is called phonology. Language has a set of sounds peculiar to it. The sound stands for words; the words stand for object, ideas, process, etc. For example, pen, advice, relative, selling and singing etc. Each word has a meaning.

(2) Morphology

Words what they are, their formation and their various changes in their form, is called morphology.

(3) Semantics

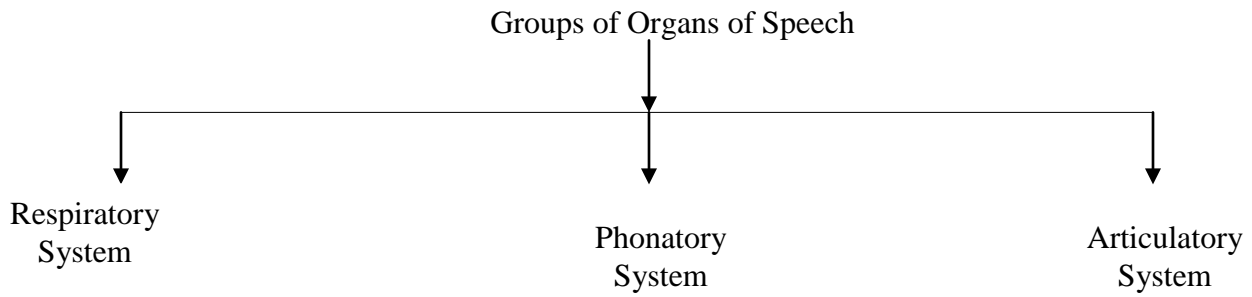
Words' formation, giving the meaning in a systematic way is called semantics.

(4) Syntax

Constructions and arrangements of words into definite meaning i.e. phrases, formulae and sentences are called syntax.

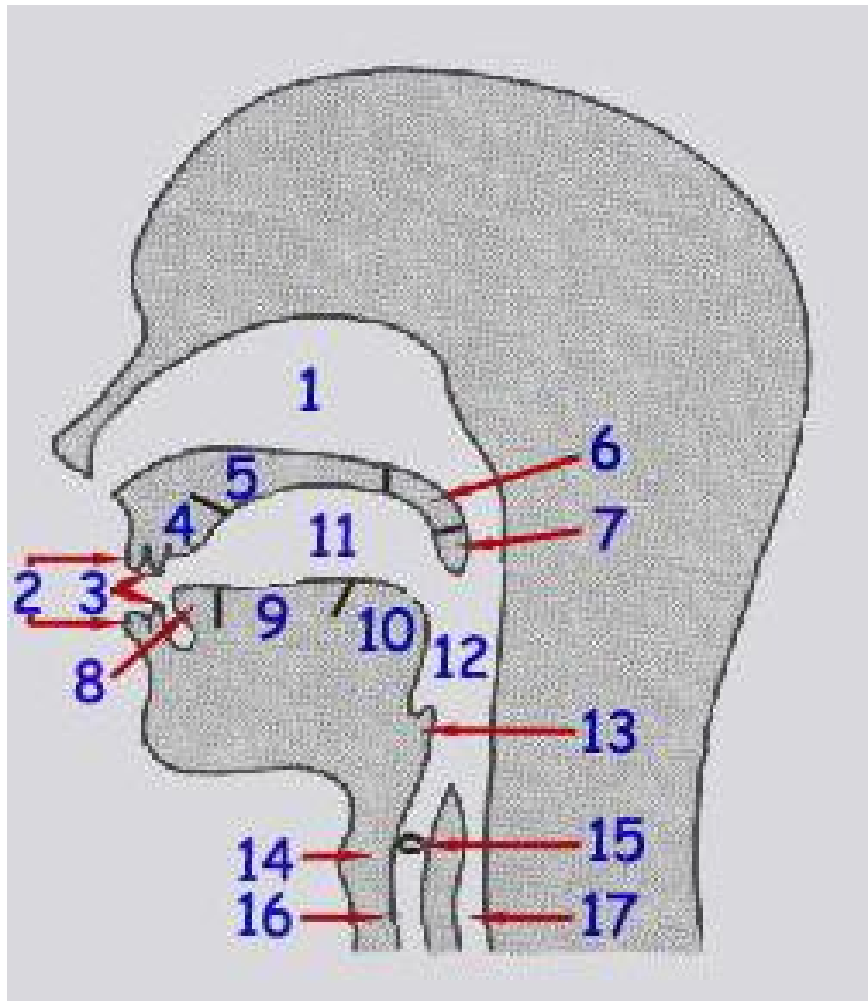
The Organs of Speech

Language is primarily speech. We produce sounds with the help of various organs in the mouth which are generally called the organs of speech. The organs of speech can be divided into three groups-



The Organs of Speech

- 1-nasal cavity
- 2-lips
- 3-teeth
- 4-aveolar ridge
- 5-hard palate
- 6-velum (soft palate)
- 7-uvula
- 8-apex (tip) of tongue
- 9-blade (front) of tongue
- 10-dorsum (back) of tongue
- 11-oral cavity
- 12-pharynx
- 13-epiglottis
- 14-larynx
- 15-vocal cords
- 16-trachea
- 17-esophagus



Organs of Speech

Source: <http://myhome.hanafos.com/~philoint>

	LL	Lips
	TT	Teeth
	TR	Alveolar ridge, convex part of the mouth, immediately behind the teeth
	H	Hard palate, concave part of the roof of the mouth
	S	Soft palate in lowered position
	U	Uvula, the loose hanging end of the soft palate
	P	Pharynx
	BL	Blade of the tongue, including the tip, the part opposite the teeth ridge
	F	Front of the tongue, the part opposite the hard palate
	B	Back of the tongue, the part opposite the soft palate
	E	Epiglottis; this is drawn over the windpipe when swallowing
	W	Windpipe
	FP	Food passage
	V	Vocal cords or vocal lips
Larynx	The upper extremity of the windpipe (Adam's apple) which contains and protects the vocal cords	

<h2>Place of Articulation</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The place of obstruction of air at some points in the vocal cords. Used to classify consonants Each place of articulation has an adjective applied to a consonant 	<i>Nouns</i>	<i>Adjectives</i>
	Lips	Labial/ Bilabial
	Teeth	Dental
	Alveolar ridge	Alveolar
	Hard palate	Palatal
	Soft palate	Velar
	Uvula	Uvular
	Pharynx	Pharyngeal
	Tip	Apical

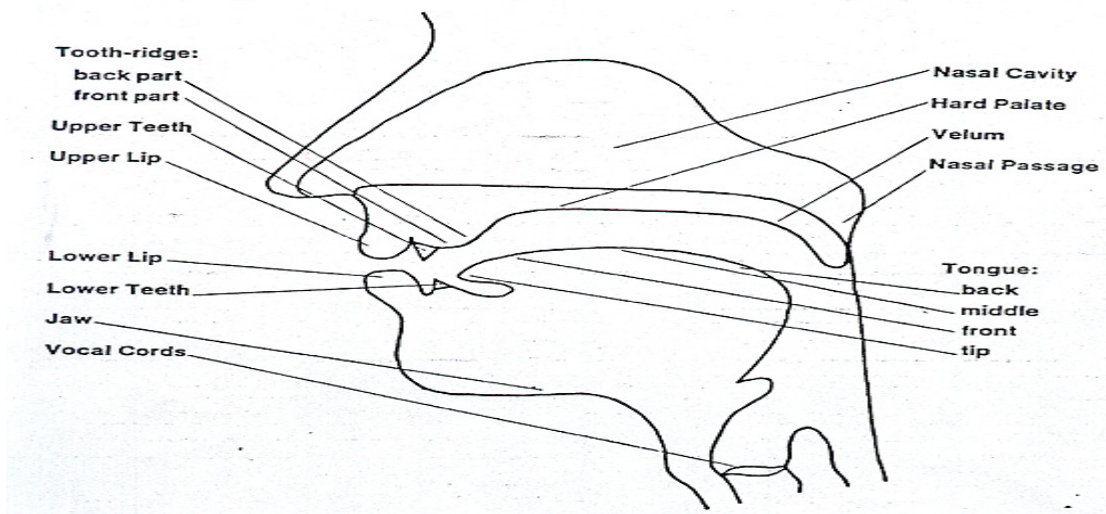
	Blade	Laminal
	Front	Dorsal
	Back	Dorsal

Description of Consonants

	<i>Consonants</i>	<i>Place</i>
	/p/	Bilabial
	/b/	Bilabial
	/t/	Tip-alveolar
	/d/	Tip-alveolar
	/k/	Back-velar
	/g/	Back-velar
	/tʃ/	Blade/front –palato-alveolar
	/dʒ/	Blade/front –palato-alveolar
	/m/	Bilabial
/n/	Tip-alveolar	

		/ŋ/	Back-velar
/f/	Labio-dental		
/v/	Labio-dental		
/θ/	Tip-dental		
/ð/	Tip-dental		
/s/	Blade-alveolar		
/z/	Blade-alveolar		
/ʃ/	Blade/front –palato-alveolar		
/ʒ/	Blade/front –palato-alveolar		
/h/	Glottal		
/l/	Tip-alveolar		
/r/	Blade-postalveolar		
/w/	Bilabial back-velar		
/j/	Front-palatal		

The Organs of Speech



Phonetics & Phonology it's important to know the Vocal Organs places; to be able to pronounce correctly...

The Vocal organs of speech are:

- Upper Lip
- Teeth
- Alveolar Ridge
- Hard Palate
- Soft Palate
- Uvula
- Pharynx
- Lower Lip
- Tip
- Blade
- Front
- Center
- Back
- Root

(1) The Respiratory System

The respiratory system consists of the following organs-

- Lungs
- Muscles of chest
- Wind pipe (trachea)

(2) The Phonatory System

This system is formed by the larynx. It is generally called 'voice-box'. It is a box like space at the top of the wind-pipe, containing the vocal cords which produce the voice.

(3) The Articulatory System

It consists of the following organs-

- Nose

- Mouth: The mouth includes the following organs-
 - (I) Tongue
 - (II) Teeth
 - (III) Roof of the mouth
 - (IV) Lips