Research Article

An Exploration of the Key Differences between Written and Spoken Language through the Linguistic Evaluation

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Article Info	Abstract
	In the evolving landscape of language communication, this research embarks on a systematic exploration of the fundamental disparities between written and spoken language, employing a linguistically driven analysis to illuminate the complex dynamics shaping these two distinct modes of human expression. The present study aims to examine the differences between written and spoken English language through the exploration of various linguistic aspects. This study follows a descriptive approach using a quantitative method to collect data. The questionnaire, as a data collection tool, presents the analysis of the proficiency of university students in English spoken and written language. The participants were from the universities in the city of Sulaymaniyah. The findings related to speaking competence of the study show a significant portion of students (39.7%) express concerns related to teacher evaluation, highlighting a notable divergence in confidence levels. Over 60% of students feel confident expressing themselves, showcasing eagerness to seize opportunities to speak English. Transitioning to English writing competence, half of the students express no fear about their writing being selected for class discussion, and 63.3% regularly engage in composing English compositions. The implications of these findings for language teaching and learning are discussed, and further research in this area is recommended.

1. Introduction

Language is probably the most important feature that makes human intelligent beings and different from other primates. Thus, it is the main reason for our progress in all aspects of life and the creation of civilization. Linguists and scientists define language as "a language is a system of conventional vocal signs by means of which human beings communicate" (Algeo & Pyles, 2010, p. 2). According to Aaron and Joshi, (2006), language is a system which people of a particular country or area use to communicate in written and spoken form. For this reason, the external language, in the technical sense, is the state that is understood in separate items from the properties of the mind/brain. In the same category, we might include

the approach of language as a collection (or system) of behaviours or actions of some kind (Chomsky, 1986, p. 20).

Recent theoretical developments have revealed that the internal language, in the technical concept, is a sense of the faculty of language. Each internal language has the capacity to construct the mental objects that we usually use to convey our thoughts and to interpret the limitless supply of common expressions that we face. Each of these mental objects relates meaning and sound in certain structured forms (Chomsky, 2008, p. 48). This field of study is sometimes referred as "language is a self-contained whole and a principle of classification" (De Saussure, 1969, p. 9). However, Hurford (2007, p. 3) states that language as a system which we translate signals into meanings, and the other way around. That is why language is stationed at two ends, the end of "signals", and the end of "meanings".

1. The researchers attempted to answer the following research questions.
2. What are the students' perceptions and feelings toward English speaking skills assessment?
3. What are the students' perspectives on challenges and competencies in English composition writing?

2. Literature Review

In this literature review, we explore and analyze existing scholarly works that delve into the key themes, theories, and research findings related to the exploration of the key differences between written and spoken language through the linguistic evaluation, providing a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge in the field.

2.1. Origin of language

The origin of language is a mystery; nobody ascertains how it happened or why it happened. But there are many theories about it, from the divine source to genetics. Yet, it can be taken some more seriously than others. To rebuild the situations which might have made the emergence of language in the process of evolution of our ancestors, we can classify this process into three stages. First, language behaviour itself can be put in the wider context of the evolution of species. After that, structure analysis of language can be done so we will be able to link it to a biological function. Finally, we can identify the circumstances which might have made a biological function useful (Dessalles, 2007, p. 2). The study of the main distinctions between spoken and written language from a linguistics perspective is intrinsically linked to the beginning

of language. Knowing the evolutionary history of language helps us to better understand the emergence and evolution of spoken and written modes. In his ground-breaking book "The Language Instinct," Steven Pinker explores the evolutionary viewpoint and explain the biological underpinnings of language acquisition and how it manifests itself later in life in both oral and written forms (Pinker, 2003). The creation of written language was a pivotal moment in the evolution of language from its prehistoric roots, changing communication patterns and giving linguistic expression a fresh perspective.

2.2. The Root of Language

The idea of a heavenly origin for language is a subject rooted in religious, philosophical, and metaphysical convictions, and it can exhibit significant diversity across various cultures, faiths, and belief systems. On the one hand, within numerous religious and mythological contexts, language is frequently perceived as a bestowal from a divine being or as possessing a sacred and enigmatic inception (Berg, 2016). According to religious sources, Allah created language and subsequently taught it to Adam. This is essentially what most people believe to be the true origin of language. God then created every land animal and every bird in the sky. Afterward, He presented them to Adam, allowing him to name them; the names Adam gave to the animals became their official names (Genesis 2:19). Allah instructed Adam in naming all the creatures and later asked him to recite these names to the angels. Furthermore, God emphasized His comprehensive knowledge, encompassing both the known and the hidden aspects of existence (the Qur'an 2:31-33). On the other hand, other researchers such as Yule (2017) states that spoken language likely originated in sub-Saharan Africa during the Middle Stone Age, around the same time as the emergence of Homo sapiens. The question of where spoken language began has puzzled linguists for many years. One theory proposes that the ancestral language is around 6,000 years old and originated among tribal nomads on the Pontic Steppe. Nevertheless, the precise origin of language remains a topic of ongoing discussion.

2.3. Social Mirror Theory

Human beings are inherently social creatures, with a long history of living together and engaging in various forms of interaction, whether it be for communication or collaborative activities. This social nature has been a constant from the days of Neanderthals to modern humans. As humans, we possess an array of social displays that are indicative of our unique social awareness. According to the social mirror theory, these displays are crucial for understanding human social dynamics. While it's true that all apes exhibit a

wide range of social displays, it can be argued that humans have an even broader spectrum, including some that are exclusive to our species and others that are more comprehensible than those of apes (Brulle, 1996).

In the context of the social mirror theory, a social display encompasses any form of behaviours that makes thoughts, intentions, or experiences accessible to others. Humans exhibit three distinct types of social displays: communication, play, and performance, each serving different purposes. Communication is primarily used to achieve specific objectives or influence others. Play, on the other hand, serves developmental and exploratory functions, without a particular goal, existing purely for the sake of enjoyment. Performance is a unique category, as it combines both communicative and playful elements, offering a multifaceted approach to human interaction (Whitehead, 2014, p. 158).

3. Methodology

In the methodology section, we present a structured and systematic framework that guides our research process, ensuring a thorough and insightful analysis of this intricate linguistic phenomenon.

3.1. Design of the Study

The current research employed a descriptive approach within a quantitative framework. The survey aimed to assess the fundamental distinctions between written and spoken language by examining linguistic elements. Additionally, by collecting participants' viewpoints, we obtained valuable insights into the way materials were perceived and their effectiveness. This multifaceted research design facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the quantitative aspects of the investigation.

3.2. Sample of the Study

In the present study, there were a total of 68 participants, with 66% of them being male and 34% female. When it came to their age distribution, the majority (66%) fell within the 18-22 years old range, while 23% were between 23 and 27 years old, 9% were aged 28 to 32, and the remaining 2% were 33 years or older. These students were enrolled in four different universities, with 44% coming from Cihan University-Sulaimani, 31% from Goizha College University, 13% from Human Development University, and 12% from Komar University of Science and Technology. As for their academic year, the breakdown was as follows: 13% were in their first year, 33% in their second year, 32% in their third year, and 22% in their

fourth year. This data provides valuable insights into the demographics of the study's participants and their academic backgrounds.

Ethical considerations in the study are essential. Prior to initiating the research, I diligently secured explicit consent from both the educational institution and the school principal, ensuring that we accurately followed all essential ethical procedures at each phase of the research project. The dedication to ethical standards underscores the credibility and legitimacy of the study.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The survey questionnaire employed a two set of questionnaires: one of them of speaking skills and the other one is for writing skills. The first section of each set was designed to gather participants' demographic information, while the second section was dedicated to collecting survey-specific details. The data collection process unfolded over the course of a month in January 2023, strategically extending over this period to ensure a thorough and in-depth investigation of participants' perceptions and experiences. To facilitate data collection, a Google Forms link was shared, enabling participants to submit their responses conveniently and securely. This approach aimed to create a comprehensive dataset that would offer valuable insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences over an extended timeframe. The two forms of survey questionnaires are shown below.

4. Results and Discussions

In this section, we show the results and discussions of two crucial aspects of students' language proficiency: their English-speaking competence and English-writing competence.

4.1. Students' English-Speaking Competence

Within this subsection, we examine the outcomes and engage in discussions pertaining to students' perceptions and feelings regarding the assessment of English-speaking skills. Concerning students' English-speaking competence, it is evident that a substantial percentage of students express concerns when speaking due to teacher evaluation, with 39.7% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Conversely, 30.9% agreed or strongly agreed with this sentiment, while 29.4% chose to remain neutral. These percentages, although not significantly different, reflect a notable divergence in students' confidence levels and their views on teacher evaluations. Questions numbered 3, 11, and 12 yielded similar results, indicating that over 60% of

students feel confident in expressing themselves without apprehension regarding others' opinions, demonstrating their eagerness to seize opportunities to speak English.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions and Feelings Toward English Speaking Skills Assessment

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. While speaking English, I feel worried and uncomfortable when I know the teacher will evaluate my skill.	8.8	22.1	29.4	22.1	17.6
2. I often choose to express my thoughts in English.	27.9	42.6	23.5	2.9	2.9
3. I have an accent that makes it harder for native speakers to understand me.	8.8	16.2	26.5	30.9	17.6
4. I don't worry if my English is much worse than others.	22.1	29.4	17.6	23.5	7.4
5. I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to speak English.	10.3	20.6	11.8	29.4	27.9
6. I often panic when I speak English under a time limit.	11.8	14.7	25	33.8	14.7
7. I'm afraid that other students would make fun of my speaking skills.	19.1	10.3	10.3	20.6	39.7
8. I freeze up when unexpectedly I'm asked to speak English.	13.2	8.8	22.1	29.4	26.5
9. I would do my best to give excuses if I'm asked to speak English.	14.7	25	16.2	17.6	26.5
10. I don't get worried about what others would think of my speaking ability.	35.3	26.5	23.5	11.8	2.9
11. I usually seek every possible chance to speak English outside of the classroom.	30.9	33.8	23.5	8.8	2.9
12. I worry about the negative comments and evaluation of the teacher on my speaking ability.	8.8	17.6	17.6	35.3	20.6
13. I often encounter some linguistic problems such as inadequate, mastery of vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical errors in my speaking.	27.9	20.6	33.8	14.7	2.9

Students generally do not believe that their accents pose a significant obstacle for native speakers to understand them, as 48.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this notion. Approximately 26.5% held a neutral perspective. Similar responses were observed when students were asked if they felt anxious under time constraints. A majority, 51.5%, indicated that they are not worried about their speaking skills in comparison to their peers.

Questions numbered 6, 8, 9, and 13 consistently produced similar outcomes, with over 55.9% of students either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with statements related to avoiding English-speaking

situations, fearing ridicule from peers, experiencing speaking freezes, or dreading teacher responses and evaluations. Regarding making excuses for not speaking English, responses were mixed, with 44.1% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing, while 39.7% agreed or strongly agreed. Students acknowledged encountering linguistic challenges when speaking, with 48.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and 33.8% remaining neutral on this issue.

University students were asked to rate their English-speaking abilities. Ratings from 1 to 4 garnered a total of 10.3%, while the highest rating of 5 to 9 received 25% of responses. Impressively, only 2.9% rated themselves a perfect 10 out of 10, indicating high levels of self-confidence in their English-speaking skills.

4.2. Students' English Writing Competence

Within this subsection, we scrutinize the results and engage in discussions regarding students' perspectives on challenges and competencies in English composition writing.

Regarding the students' response to the survey on writing competence, half of the participants express no fear about their writing being selected for class discussion, while over a quarter remain indifferent to the idea. Additionally, the students regularly engage in composing English compositions whenever the opportunity arises, with 63.3% affirming this, while 23.5% responded neutrally. Concerning the ability to initiate and conclude an essay, a significant 56.3% either disagree or strongly disagree with the notion of not knowing how to do so. However, it is concerning that a quarter of them agree or strongly agree, indicating a relatively high percentage of university students who may lack a fundamental understanding of this aspect.

Similar or comparable percentages can also be observed for questions (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14). When examining the percentage of students capable of using different sentence types, (48.6%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while (32.4%) remained neutral. This highlights a notable deficiency in the ability of university students to employ various sentence structures to express themselves effectively. The practice of writing down one's thoughts in English is viewed positively as a means to enhance writing skills, with (54.5%) agreeing or strongly agreeing when asked if they write their thoughts in English.

In terms of self-assessment, when university students were asked to rate their English writing abilities, less than (3%) gave ratings between 1 and 4. Their self-evaluation ranged from (16.2%) to (19.1%) for ratings between 5 and 9, while only (3%) awarded themselves a perfect score of 10 out of 10. This self-

assessment reflects varying levels of confidence in their English writing abilities among the surveyed students.

Table 2. Students' Perspectives on Challenges and Competencies in English Composition Writing

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class.	4.4	14.7	30.9	26.5	23.5
2. Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions.	22.1	41.2	23.5	7.4	5.9
3. I still don't know how to start and end an essay.	8.8	16.2	17.6	33.8	23.5
4. I have a fear of writing because of my inability to express my opinions and write effectively.	10.3	16.2	22.1	35.3	16.2
5. Because of a lack of sufficient writing skills practice, I feel anxious	7.4	17.6	29.4	30.9	14.7
6. I don't have a good comprehension of writing techniques.	10.3	20.6	20.6	44.1	4.4
7. I don't have enough ideas to write about the topic/topics given by the teacher during the exam. It is because I often feel nervous.	19.1	7.4	16.2	39.7	17.6
8. I have low writing confidence.	11.8	16.2	22.1	35.3	14.7
9. I can use a variety of sentence types in my essay, including simple, compound, complex and compound complex.	11.8	36.8	32.4	16.2	2.9
10. I often choose to write down my thoughts in English.	32.4	22.1	25	13.2	7.4
11. I am afraid of what others would think of my composition writing	11.8	20.6	16.2	32.4	19.1
12. I don't know how to brainstorm.	16.2	13.2	19.1	36.8	14.7
13. I don't know how to make an outline for my writing.	16.2	19.1	16.2	33.8	14.7

5. Conclusions

This study has investigated the fundamental disparities between written and spoken English language competence by assessing various linguistic aspects. The investigation has unveiled distinct differences between spoken and written language, encompassing elements like the use of gestures, sentence structure, and coherence.

The study's outcomes also shed light on the varying proficiencies of university students in speaking and writing. The implications of these findings carry substantial weight in the realm of language teaching

and learning. Educators and language instructors can leverage this knowledge to craft pedagogical strategies that accommodate the distinctions between spoken and written language. For instance, teachers can incorporate activities geared towards enhancing oral communication skills, such as conversation practice and role-playing, to bolster students' speaking capabilities. Simultaneously, they can provide students with diverse opportunities to engage in writing across different genres, nurturing their writing skills and honing their capacity to express themselves cogently in written language.

Furthermore, the findings from this study underscore the need for further research in this domain. Future investigations could explore additional linguistic nuances distinguishing spoken and written language, such as vocabulary utilization, and delve into how these distinctions influence language acquisition and performance. Ultimately, this study underscores the paramount importance of grasping the disparities between spoken and written language for effective communication in diverse settings, spanning academic and professional contexts.

Declaration of Competing Interest The author declare that she has no known competing of interests.

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