



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SPEECH AND WRITING		
Characteristic	Writing	Speech
Permanence	Fixed and stable. The reading can be done at whatever time, speed and level of thoroughness the reader wishes	Fleeting, moves on in real time. Listener must generally follow what is said at the speed set by the speaker
Explicitness	Explicit context and references	Not everything made explicit due to real-time situation and shared knowledge between speaker and listener
Density	Lexical density. Lexical density is the ratio of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) to grammatical words (prepositions, auxiliary verbs, conjunctions) In written texts: content words are close together	"Diluted" information / redundancy: lots of repetitions, fillers (e.g. <i>I mean, well, er</i> ), pauses... → longer texts In spoken texts, content words are spaced out by the insertion of grammatical words
Detachment	Detached in time and space from its reading → more time and attention to formal aspects	Immediate interaction with known listeners, with the availability of immediate feedback in some situations → rephrasing, variation of intonation and stress, speeding up or slowing down. Sometimes: visual cues (paralinguistic features such as body language, facial gestures, etc.) to help to convey the message
Linguistic and discursive devices	Lack of access to immediate feedback from reader who does not understand → CORRECTION AND ACCURACY REQUIREMENTS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greater need for logical organisation,</li> <li>• greater clarity,</li> <li>• conventional rules of grammar and precise and formal vocabulary</li> <li>• acceptable punctuation</li> <li>• acceptable spelling</li> <li>• acceptable handwriting/typewriting</li> </ul>	Improvisation while speaking: ongoing alterations (self-corrections, fillers, etc.), redundancy... Informal speech: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grammar: utterances are not usually divided neatly into sentences; a grammatical structure may change in mid-utterance, unfinished utterances are common</li> <li>• Vocabulary: often colloquial (e.g. <i>guy, knackered</i>)</li> </ul> Accuracy ("Standard English") not so much required but fluency

Adapted from:

- Flowerdew, J. & Miller, L. (2005). *Second language listening: theory and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harmer, J. (1991). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Longman.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.