Transcript

Slide 1

Hello! Welcome to the section on Language Skills of the CPD course. This section deals with the main language skills with a specific attention to Oracy and Literacy in order to revisit them, looking at English within an ELF aware perspective.

Slide 2

Let's see what our individual understanding of language skills as learners and as teachers in Activity 1.1 and answer the following questions:

What do we refer to when we talk of Language Skills? What are your first thoughts?
We usually associate the 4 skills with **reception** and **production**. By reception, we mean listening and reading. By production, speaking and writing. And this, has to do with communication.

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In the second part of our reflection (Activity 1.2) we have a visual representation of language skills.
- Look at the puzzle pattern, do you think that this pattern best represents the relationship among the 4 skills?
- Focus on the way the different pieces are connected one to the other, does each connect with the other pieces? Yes? No? Partly? If no, why? If partly, why?

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In the third part of our reflection (ACTIVITY 1.3) we have another visual representation of language skills.
- **Look at the pattern – a Venn diagram – below. Do you think this one represents the relationship among the 4 skills better than the previous pattern?**
- Look at the way the different pieces are connected one to the other.
- Does each connect with the other pieces? Yes? No?
    Yes ☐ No ☐ Partly ☐
    If no, why? If partly, why?

- As a matter of fact, this second representation takes into account the fact that the skills in real life are almost always interconnected, thus it is difficult to separate them in order to teach them.

It is important to look at them as they occur in real life!

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Let's look more closely at Language skills.
They are related to and characterized by **spoken** and **written language** features
- Spoken and written language function and use in real life and their features, have always had a specific role in learning and in language learning
- Our learners are very familiar with spoken and written language, since they experience them in their first and second language, even if they might not be fully aware of their main features

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Let's see how the **Common European Framework of Reference presents Language Skills** in the CEFR, specifically within the definition of communicative competence

Language learners' **communicative language competence:**
- can be considered as comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic
- is activated in the performance of the various language activities, involving reception, production, interaction or mediation—each of these types of activity is possible in relation to texts in oral or written form, or both

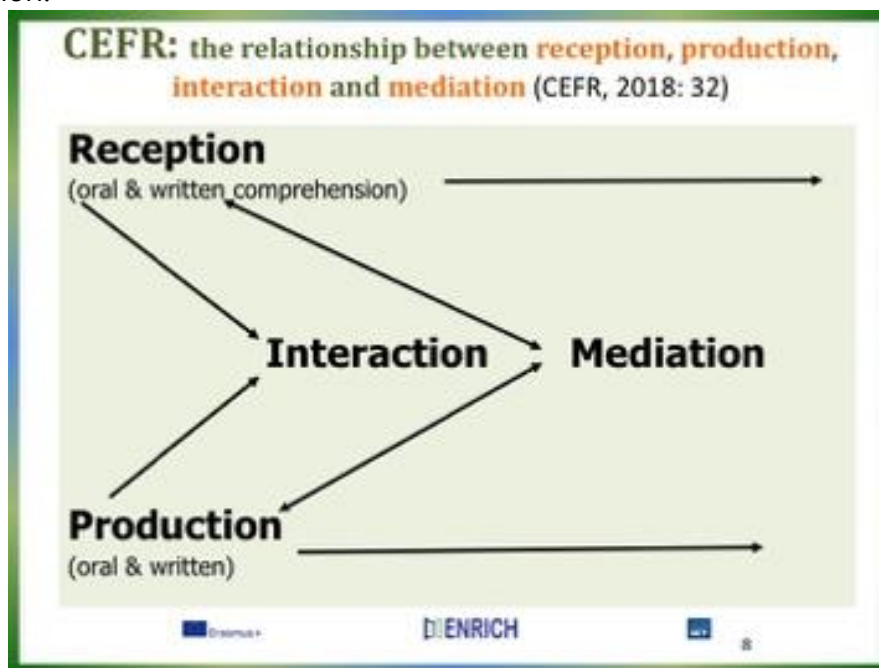**Slide 7**:

Language Skills in the CEFR

The CEFR, based upon the notion of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, has not included yet any explicit reference to ELF—however, in the most recent versions (2018), TWO relevant aspects are included:
- The notion of the **native** speaker as a target model is **not mentioned**
- The notion of **mediation**—communication between people who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate to each other directly—is highlighted and fully described.
- This highlights the relevance of **authenticity**, where the focus is on language in use rather than a standard model to refer to when learning a language.

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CEFR: the relationship between reception, production, interaction and mediation (CEFR, 2018: 32)
As you can see from the visual representation that reception and production are seen in their interaction while Mediation, the newly introduced communicative activity that involves language learners using different strategies and forms of interaction.

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Let's now have a closer look at the CEFR Descriptors. What are they?
They describe:
WHAT = communicative tasks
the language learner
CAN DO = performance
WHERE = in a specific context
WHEN = the time/situation
HOW = the language resources

Slide 10

In Activity 2 you are asked to think of the 4 skills as used in real life and in the ELT classroom
- Read the following statements and express your agreement choosing one of the options provided (from 0 strongly disagree to 4 strongly agree). Briefly justify your response for each of them

1. The 4 skills are traditionally taught separately in the language classroom
0 Strongly disagree – 1 Disagree – 2 Neither disagree or agree – 3 Agree – 4 Strongly agree

2. In real life people are not aware of the distinction between the 4 skills
0 Strongly disagree – 1 Disagree – 2 Neither disagree or agree – 3 Agree – 4 Strongly agree

3. In real life people use all the 4 skills, often mixing them
0 Strongly disagree – 1 Disagree – 2 Neither disagree or agree – 3 Agree – 4 Strongly agree

4. EL teachers devote to the 4 language skills the same time and attention
0 Strongly disagree – 1 Disagree – 2 Neither disagree or agree – 3 Agree – 4 Strongly agree

5. In coursebooks and language tests skills are usually presented separately
0 Strongly disagree – 1 Disagree – 2 Neither disagree or agree – 3 Agree – 4 Strongly agree

6. In real life, people feel more confident in speaking
0 Strongly disagree – 1 Disagree – 2 Neither disagree or agree – 3 Agree – 4 Strongly agree

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Activity 2
Now, Let's see what happens in real life and in the classroom by reading the following statements, what do you think?

Then compare your responses and discuss them in the FORUM (remember to click on the link)

1. The 4 skills are traditionally taught separately in the language classroom
Classroom-based research reveals that the majority of teachers do teach them separately, even if there is a tendency to associate more listening with speaking since INTERACTION was introduced in the CEFR descriptors.

2. In real life people are not aware of the distinction between the 4 skills
People do not consciously think of the skills when using them, but they are certainly more aware of the skills they need when they submit a request or ask for directions

3. In real life people use all the 4 skills, often mixing them
This is most often the case, except in special events, like seminars, where speakers only use speaking, even if they use their notes to sustain their speech

4. EL teachers devote the 4 language skills the same time and attention
Classroom-based research reveals that teachers tend to overlook listening and speaking.

5. **In coursebooks and language tests, skills are usually presented separately**
This is often the case, but in the last decade publishers have started integrating the skills in the activities and in the tasks. In language tests, spoken and written interaction have almost always been part of the tests

6. In real life, people feel more confident in speaking
This might be partly true for L1 users, while surveys reveal that English language learners feel less confident in speaking
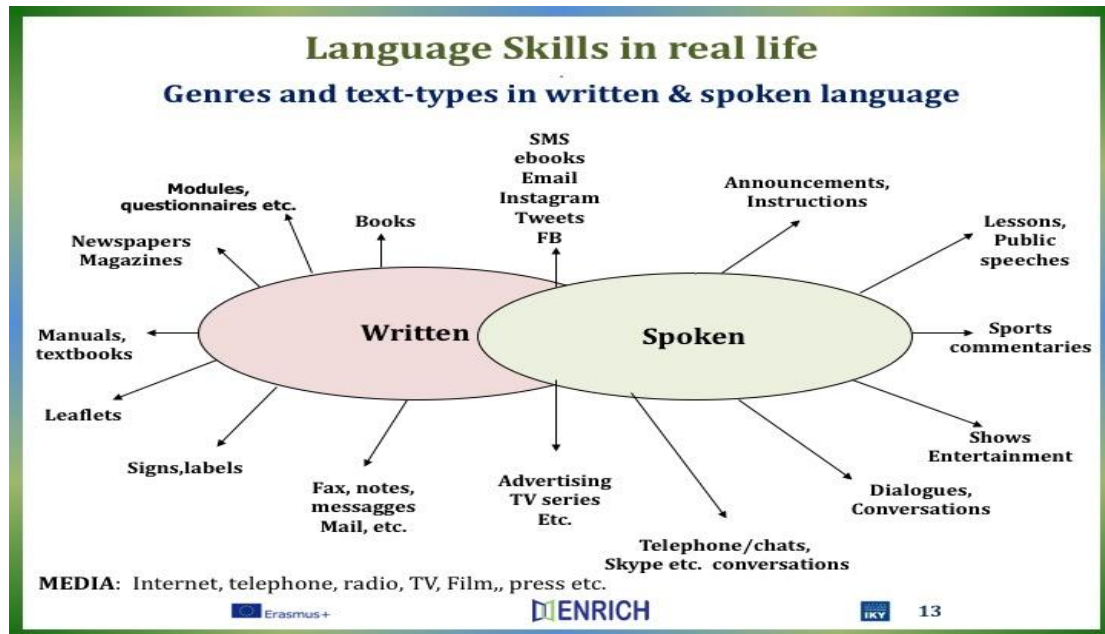
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Let's look at Language Skills in real life. Think of some of **the features generally associated with spoken and written language.**
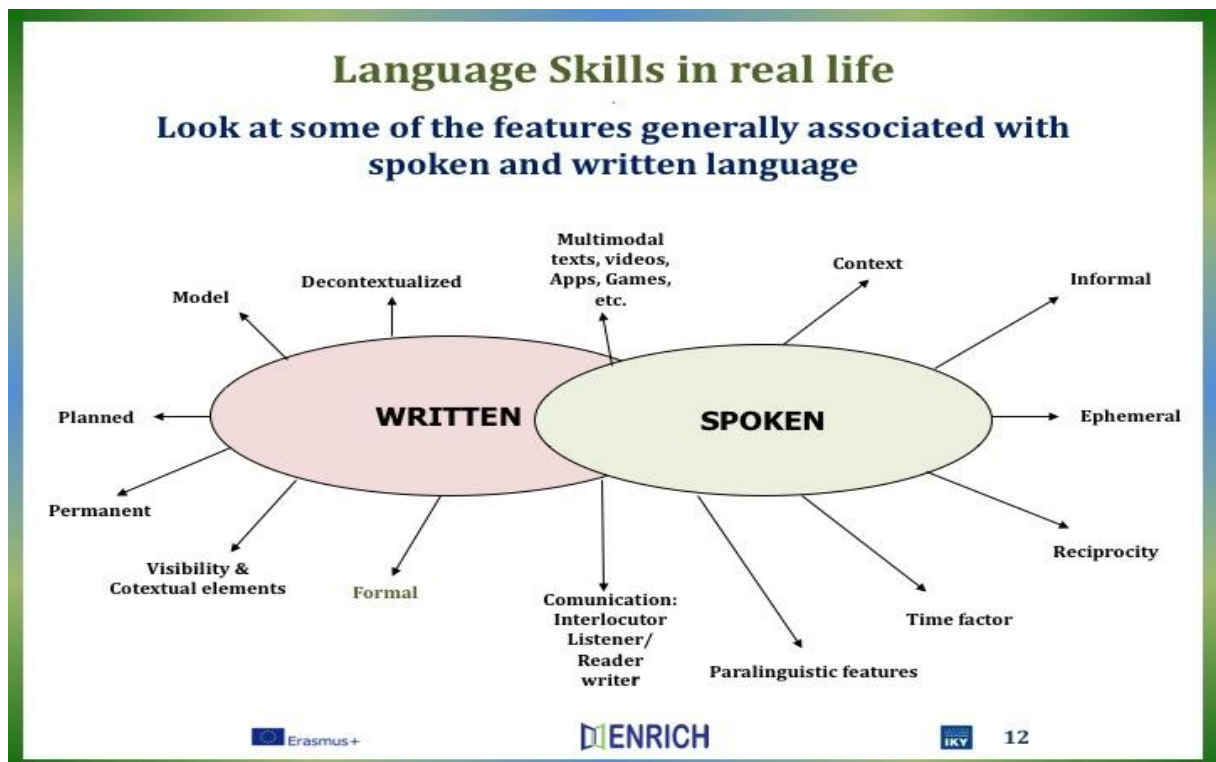
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Language Skills in real life Let's now look at the Genres and text-types in written & spoken language.

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What happens to Language Skills now in a time of change?

- In real life communication, receptive and productive language skills are frequently **mixed** and **used interchangeably**
- Most recent forms of communication have highlighted the **multimodality nature** of written and spoken texts
- As a consequence, their nature is becoming more and more **hybrid**

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Language Skills in a time of change

- Current **societal changes** brought about by unstoppable migration flows are modifying the school population profile, now more and more **multilingual and multicultural**
- Further changes are triggered by **ICT** affecting the **forms** and the **construct of communication**
- In these contexts—particularly in those mostly affected by migration, as the Mediterranean and the European ones—**spoken communication** is

taking place in **English**, predominantly **among non-native speakers**, i.e. in ELF

- **ELF** is thus already characterizing learning and ELT teaching practice.

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Language Skills in a time of change

- Traditional features of spoken language, more than written language, are rapidly being characterized by translingual and transcultural orientations & repertoires

- There is a growing need for multimedia literacies development in education.

Traditional language skills in ELT are now being 'revisited' within an ELF-aware approach

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In a time of change we should start Revisiting Oracy and Literacy
- New forms of **oracy** and of **literacy** are developing as one of the consequences of the societal changes and of the migration flows that are more and more characterizing **communication** and **learning**
- In **ELF-aware approach**, the language skills mostly affected by these changes are **aural comprehension** and **spoken interaction**, since they are the skills most frequently involved in communication exchanges
- Traditional ways of developing EL learners' listening and speaking skills need to take into consideration a number of **factors affecting aural comprehension and spoken interaction**, and adapt or modify tools, activities, materials and expected outcomes

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Let's look at Spoken interaction: let's explore different ways

- **Spoken language is at the same time object and instrument of our lessons**
- **Learners' speaking outcomes reveal the lack of effective teaching approaches and practice**
- **Some of the areas traditionally indicated as problematic are:**
  - The language model to be presented
  - The degree of «acceptability» in oral production/interaction
  - The identification of the most appropriate and successful teaching paths
  - The lack of time for learners' interactions development

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Spoken interaction: a way and ways

In an ELF-aware approach, effective procedures would imply:
- A close link between speaking and listening
- Spoken language and pragmatics awareness
- Use of noticing and of languaging tasks
- Authentic input sources from a variety of spoken genres & text types (e.g. TV series, chats, games, TV news, shows, TED talks, National Geographic documentaries etc.), where both native and non-native speakers speak and interact in English

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Let's now look at Aural comprehension:

In an ELF-aware approach listening is a central skill for communication awareness that demands a different approach in terms of resources (authentic) and activities (more learner-centred), bearing in mind that:
- Listening input in coursebooks is usually based on native speakers' models
- Learners' out-of-school exposure is mainly to on-line communication – where learners are exposed to World Englishes and ELF

Learners' awareness of language use and of communicative & mediation strategies are crucial in learners' interactions within real/authentic contexts

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Think now of Speaking and Listening skills in a context of change—let's explore the issue of intelligibility

- Native speaker pronunciation has traditionally been considered as a suitable model for EL learners

- In an ELF-aware approach, one of the challenges facing EL teachers is the model of pronunciation to be developed and the type of listening practice to be used—knowing that our learners are mostly exposed to a wide variety of non-native speakers, particularly outside the school, and will be mostly experiencing NNS-NNS interactions

- The processes by which understanding is achieved in ELF interactions are qualitatively different from those observed in NS-based interactions—this has implications for ELT practice

- Thus, the need to focus **on intelligibility**

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Speaking and Listening in a context of change—the issue of intelligibility

- The accents ELF users encounter as they communicate globally vary enormously and learners need to know how to deal with this variation (Walker, 2018)
- Jenkins (2000) investigated the features of pronunciation that caused misunderstandings between speakers from different countries
- On the basis of this research, she proposed those features of pronunciation that are important for mutual intelligibility for non-native speakers as opposed to intelligibility for some hypothetical native speaker of a so-called standard variety (Deterding, 2012)
- For more on Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core, see "The English as a Lingua Franca Discourse" section of this Course

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Speaking and Listening in a context of change—the issue of intelligibility

- EL learners facing the challenge of NNS-NNS interactions in an ELF-aware approach need special teaching guidance and support in their listening and speaking activities
- Robin Walker suggests the use of:

❖ Receptive phonological accommodation
  o Receptive phonological accommodation allows us to adjust our expectations as listeners,
  o It is used to improve their ability to understand English spoken with different non-standard accents—we need to expose them to these accents, using a variety of already available resources.
❖ Productive phonological accommodation
  o Productive phonological accommodation allows us to consciously adjust our output in order to make it easier for listeners to understand us

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Activity 3
- You have been so far revisiting traditional ways of conceiving language skills, specifically receptive skills, such as LISTENING, and productive skills, such as SPEAKING, or better SPOKEN INTERACTION
- Go through the notions presented so far, choose and write:

a) 3 aspects that you regard as innovative, because you had never thought of them before (look back at the activities, any change in your first responses?)
b) 2 notions central to your own understanding of an ELF-aware approach
c) 1 activity (listening/speaking/spoken interaction) that you would use with your learners in an ELF-aware approach

Report your thoughts and your activity to your colleagues in the Forum.

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What have you learnt about Language Skills?

- Language skills
- Language skills in real life
- Language skills in the CEFR
- Activities and mediation in the CEFR
- Spoken and Written language
- Language skills in a time of change
- Speaking and listening
- Intelligibility