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## THE STUDY OF FORMAL SPEECH IN LINGUISTICS

Annotation

Formal speech is a central area of investigation in linguistics, particularly in the fields of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. It reflects how speakers adapt their language in accordance with social norms, institutional expectations, and communicative goals. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the linguistic features, social functions, and analytical approaches related to formal speech.

**Key words:** Formal, informal, linguistic features, morphology, word formation, nominalizations, pragmatics, phonology, sociolinguistic, intertextuality.

## ИЗУЧЕНИЕ ФОРМАЛЬНОЙ РЕЧИ В ЛИНГВИСТИКЕ

Аннотация

Формальная речь является центральной областью исследования в лингвистике, особенно в таких дисциплинах, как социолингвистика, прагматика и анализ дискурса. Она отражает, как говорящие адаптируют свой язык в соответствии с социальными нормами, институциональными ожиданиями и коммуникативными целями. В этой статье представлен всесторонний обзор лингвистических особенностей, социальных функций и аналитических подходов, связанных с формальной речью.

**Ключевые слова:** Формальный, неформальный, лингвистические особенности, морфология, словообразование, номинализация, прагматика, фонология, социолингвистика, интертекстуальность.

## LINGVISTIKADA RASMIY NUTQNI O‘RGANISH MASALASI

Annotatsiya

Rasmiy nutq — lingvistikada, xususan, sotsiolingvistika, pragmatika va diskurs tahlili sohalarida markaziy tadqiqot obyekti hisoblanadi. U nutq so‘zlovchilarning ijtimoiy normalar, institutiyaviy talablar va muloqot maqsadlariga muvofiq tilini qanday moslashtirishini aks ettiradi. Ushbu maqolada rasmiy nutq bilan bog‘liq lingvistik xususiyatlar, ijtimoiy funksiyalar va tahliliy yondoshuvlar to‘liq ko‘rib chiqiladi.

**Kalit so‘zlar:** Rasmiy, norasmiy, lingvistik xususiyatlar, morfologiya, so‘z yasash, nominalizatsiyalar, pragmatika, fonologiya, sotsiolingvistika, intertekstualik.

**Introduction.** Language is not only a tool for communication but also a reflection of social structure, identity, and context. Within linguistics, the study of formal speech occupies an important position because it highlights how language varies according to social situations, relationships, and cultural expectations. Formal speech refers to the type of language used in professional, academic, or official settings—contexts where politeness, correctness, and clarity are highly valued. It is characterized by the careful choice of words, grammatical accuracy, and the avoidance of slang or colloquial expressions.[1]

The study of formal speech in linguistics helps researchers understand how speakers adapt their language to fit specific contexts, audiences, and purposes. This area of research draws on fields such as sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, exploring how social factors like age, status, education, and cultural background influence linguistic choices. For instance, a person’s speech at a job interview or during a presentation will differ significantly from casual conversation among friends.

In summary, the study of formal speech in linguistics provides valuable insights into the relationship between language, society, and context. By examining how speakers use formal language to express respect, authority, or professionalism, linguists gain a deeper understanding of the social dimensions of communication.[2]

**Literature Review.** The study of formal speech in linguistics has long attracted attention from researchers interested in how language varies across different social contexts. Formal speech, often referred to as the formal register or formal style, is typically used in professional, academic, or ceremonial situations where respect, politeness, and clarity are required. Scholars have explored formal speech through various subfields of linguistics, including sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis, each offering unique perspectives on how and why people adjust their language use in formal contexts.[3]

One of the foundational studies in this area is Dell Hymes’ (1974) “Ethnography of Speaking”, which emphasizes that language use must always be understood in relation to social context. Hymes proposed the SPEAKING model, outlining factors—such as setting, participants, ends, act sequence, and norms—that influence how formal or informal a speech situation may be. Building on this, William Labov (1972) in his work on sociolinguistic variation showed that people adjust their linguistic behavior depending on social class, audience, and formality level. Labov’s studies in New York City demonstrated how pronunciation and grammar shift toward more standardized forms in formal settings, suggesting that formality is a key dimension of linguistic variation.

In the realm of pragmatics, scholars such as Brown and Levinson (1987) explored formal speech through the lens of politeness theory. They argued that speakers use formal

language as a strategy to maintain “face” and show respect to others in socially distant or hierarchical relationships. Similarly, Leech (1983) in his *Principles of Pragmatics* proposed that politeness and formality are governed by social conventions that aim to reduce interpersonal friction. Thus, the use of formal speech is not only a matter of linguistic structure but also of social appropriateness and relationship management.[4]

Overall, the literature reveals that formal speech is not a fixed or universal phenomenon but a context-dependent linguistic practice shaped by social norms, power relations, and communicative goals. From classic sociolinguistic theories to modern studies of digital discourse, researchers agree that understanding formal speech provides crucial insights into how language reflects and reinforces the structure of society[5].

**Research Methodology.** 1. Research Approach. The present study employs a qualitative research approach complemented by limited quantitative elements to examine the linguistic and social characteristics of formal speech. The qualitative approach is chosen because it allows for a deeper understanding of how speakers produce and interpret formal language within specific social contexts. The study focuses not merely on grammatical structures but also on pragmatic and sociolinguistic dimensions, such as politeness, power relations, and context-driven language variation[6].

#### 2. Research Design

This study follows a descriptive and analytical research design. It aims to describe how formal speech operates in different communicative situations and analyze its linguistic components. The research is guided by the following objectives:

To identify the main linguistic features that characterize formal speech.

To explore how social variables (age, status, education, and setting) influence the degree of formality.

The study draws upon theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and register theory, particularly the works of Halliday (1978), Labov (1972), and Brown & Levinson (1987). These frameworks provide tools for analyzing how linguistic choices are shaped by context and social interaction.

#### 3. Participants

The participants were purposefully selected to represent speakers who frequently engage in formal communication. The sample includes approximately 25 individuals divided into three groups:

University lecturers and academic staff (10)

Undergraduate students (10)

Professionals from administrative and business sectors (5)

This diverse group ensures that variations in speech style can be analyzed across different professions and social hierarchies. The participants' age range was between 22 and 55 years, with both male and female speakers included to account for gender-based language variation[7].

#### 4. Data Collection Methods

To obtain comprehensive and authentic data, three primary methods were used:

a. Observation and Audio Recording

b. Structured Interviews

c. Document and Text Analysis

Written forms of formal language—such as official letters, speeches, and academic texts—were analyzed to compare spoken and written registers. This provided insight into how formal language norms are maintained across modes of communication.[8]

#### 5. Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed in multiple stages:

**Transcription:** Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using standardized linguistic transcription conventions.

**Coding:** Utterances were coded based on linguistic features such as vocabulary choice, sentence structure, modality, politeness markers, and tone.

**Categorization:** Each instance of speech was categorized as highly formal, moderately formal, or neutral according to contextual indicators like setting and audience.

**Comparative Analysis:** The features identified in formal contexts were compared to informal speech samples to highlight linguistic contrasts.

**Interpretation:** The findings were interpreted within the theoretical frameworks of register variation and politeness theory to explain the social meaning of formal speech.

#### 6. Theoretical Framework

The analysis is informed by three major theoretical perspectives:

**Halliday's Register Theory (1978):** Focuses on how field, tenor, and mode affect the degree of formality in language.

**Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987):** Explains how formal speech is used to maintain face and express social respect.

**Labov's Sociolinguistic Variation Theory (1972):** Demonstrates that linguistic style shifts depending on audience, setting, and social status.

These theories collectively guide the interpretation of data, helping to link linguistic patterns with social meanings.

#### 7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and written informed consent was obtained before recording or interviewing them. All data were anonymized, ensuring that no participant's identity could be revealed. Recordings and transcripts were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.

In conclusion, this methodology combines qualitative linguistic analysis with sociolinguistic interpretation to explore how formal speech functions across different social and communicative settings. Through observation, interviews, and textual analysis, the study aims to reveal not only the structural features of formal speech but also its social purposes—how it conveys politeness, authority, and respect within human interaction.

#### **Analysis and Results.** 1. Overview of Data Collected

The data collected for this study consisted of audio recordings of 20 formal interactions, semi-structured interviews with 25 participants, and written documents including official letters, speeches, and academic presentations. The spoken data included classroom lectures, job interviews, and conference presentations. The analysis focused on identifying the linguistic features of formal speech, as well as the social and pragmatic strategies employed by speakers.[9]

#### 2. Linguistic Features of Formal Speech

The analysis revealed several consistent linguistic patterns across formal speech contexts:

a. Vocabulary and Lexical Choice

Participants consistently used specialized, precise, and context-specific vocabulary.

Slang, contractions, and colloquial expressions were rarely used.

This finding aligns with Biber's (1995) register theory, which suggests that formal registers favor lexical density and precise terminology.

b. Sentence Structure and Syntax

Formal speech often employed complex sentences, passive voice, and nominalizations.

Coordinating conjunctions were more frequently replaced with subordinating clauses to create elaborate syntactic structures.

### 3. Social and Contextual Factors

The study also examined how social variables influenced formality:

Feature	Formal Speech	Informal Speech
Vocabulary	Precise, technical, professional	Everyday, colloquial
Sentence Structure	Complex, passive, nominalization	Simple, active, conversational
Politeness Strategies	Hedging, honorifics, modals	Direct, casual
Pronunciation & Prosody	Clear, measured, deliberate	Rapid, relaxed, less structured
Use of Fillers	Minimal	Frequent

These findings confirm that formal speech is context-dependent, socially regulated, and governed by norms of correctness and politeness.

### 5. Results from Interviews

Interviews revealed participants' conscious awareness of formal speech:

**Awareness of Context:** Most participants acknowledged consciously shifting language depending on situation.

**Perceived Professionalism:** Formal speech was strongly associated with credibility, professionalism, and authority.

**Challenges:** Some participants found maintaining formal speech challenging in long or spontaneous interactions, indicating that formal language requires cognitive effort and social awareness.

These results highlight that formal speech is not merely a matter of grammar but also a social

### Conclusion and Recommendations

**Conclusion.** The present study explored the linguistic and social characteristics of formal speech in English across academic, professional, and institutional contexts. The analysis revealed that formal speech is a complex linguistic and social phenomenon, shaped by both structural and contextual factors. Key conclusions include:

**Linguistic Characteristics:** Formal speech is characterized by precise vocabulary, complex syntactic structures, nominalizations, passive constructions, and minimal use of colloquial expressions or fillers. Politeness strategies, such as hedging, modal verbs, and honorifics, are consistently employed to maintain social respect. Prosodic features, including measured pace and clear enunciation, further distinguish formal speech from informal conversation.[10]

**Social and Contextual Factors:** The degree of formality is strongly influenced by social variables such as education, professional status, audience, and setting. Speakers consciously adapt their language to align with expectations of professionalism, credibility, and social hierarchy.

**Education and Professional Status:** Higher-educated participants (lecturers and professionals) consistently used more formal structures than students in similar contexts.

### 4. Comparison Between Formal and Informal Speech

The comparative analysis revealed several key differences:

**Awareness and Cognitive Effort:** Participants demonstrated conscious awareness of formal language norms and reported cognitive effort when producing highly formal speech, highlighting the role of social and cultural knowledge in linguistic performance.

Overall, formal speech emerges as a socially regulated linguistic practice that functions not only to convey information but also to express professionalism, authority, and respect within human interaction.

**2. Recommendations.** Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for educators, language learners, and professionals:

**Incorporation of Formal Speech Training in Education:** Language programs should include explicit instruction on formal speech features, including vocabulary, sentence structure, and politeness strategies. Activities such as formal presentations, debates, and professional role-plays can enhance learners' ability to produce formal language effectively.

**Awareness of Contextual Appropriateness:** Speakers should be trained to recognize social and situational cues that determine the level of formality required. Understanding audience expectations, hierarchical relations, and institutional norms can improve communication efficacy.

**Development of Listening and Imitation Skills:** Exposure to authentic formal speech through lectures, seminars, and professional interactions can help learners internalize lexical, syntactic, and prosodic features. Transcription and analysis exercises can also reinforce formal speech patterns.

Formal speech plays a pivotal role in social interaction, professional communication, and academic achievement. By understanding its structural features and social functions, speakers can enhance clarity, authority, and respect in their communication. Educational programs, workplace training, and further research should continue to emphasize formal language competence, recognizing it as a key skill for personal and professional development.

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