

## CLOSE INSIGHT TO THE LANGUAGE REGISTER: ITS TYPES, FUNCTIONS AND FEATURES

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### ABSTRACT

The article deals with the term “language register”, which is an integral property of the English language. In the article, the definitions of “register” provided in accordance with linguistic, sociolinguistic and stylistic viewpoints as well as the interpretations of “register” proposed by some eminent scholars are presented. The primary features of register as well as the major types of language register are meticulously examined with the examples. The study also elaborates on a comprehensive overview on the factors of using particular style of language register in various contexts.

**Keywords:** register, speech, discourse, language use contexts, functions, features, vocabulary, term, linguistics, sociolinguistics, stylistics, significance, communication, situation, field, mode, style, formal register, informal register, semiformal register, neutral register, frozen register, intimate register, consultative register, casual register

### INTRODUCTION

It is a common theory that the English language is highly estimated to be one of the richest languages that entail the multitudes of vocabulary bank which in turn can be discerned into various forms, to be more accurate, into the modes of language register. In this occasion, it would be of essence to thoroughly elucidate the term register. From the linguistic perspective, register is generally defined as a medium a speaker uses the language in various forms in different circumstances. In a similar sense, from the sociolinguistic standpoint, a register is counted to be the variety of language for a particular purpose, in a particular communicative situation. Stylistically, register is described to be the kind of language use that is apposite to a particular function in a situational context. Furthermore, language register is also characterized as the scale of formality that is utilized both verbally and non-verbally. More precisely, registers are utilized in all forms of communication embodying oral, written or signed.

## METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A hefty number of scholars have also proposed the definition of register. As an example, Trudgill (1983) states: “Linguistic varieties that are linked ... to occupations, professions or topics have been termed registers”. He further claims that registers are typically distinctive from one another by the use of certain vocabulary. The scholars Scherer and Giles (1979) propose the definition of register as follows:

Register is a set of specialized vocabulary and preferred (or dispreferred) syntactic and rhetorical devices/structures, used by specific socio-professional groups for special purposes. A register is a property or characteristic of a language and not of an individual or a class of speakers.

In accord with the elaboration of the term register by the scholar Crystal, “Register refers a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations, e.g. a register of scientific, religious, formal English”. Being the prominent initiators and investigators of the term register, the scholars Halliday and Hasan (1976) term register as “the linguistic features which are typically associated with a configuration of situational features – with particular values of the field, mode and tenor”. They further interpret that register can help define discourse (written or spoken language) by adding another level of meaning. Here it is of high necessity the aforementioned three features of a situation in which register variations can be vividly illuminated.

- Field refers to the subject matter or the topic being dealt with. Therefore, register can relate to varied spheres such as politics, education, biology, chemistry, literature, sport and others.

- Mode refers to the medium of communication of both verbal and written nature. Here the former can embrace discussions, debates, chats, seminars, lectures, radio talks, sermons or political speeches while the latter can encompass essays, articles, manuscripts, reports, set of instructions in manuals and many others.

- Tenor, in other words the style of register, refers to the type of role interaction and the relations among the interlocutors of the discourse – addresser and addressee, writer and reader and etc.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Particularly, the language register can be of the following three styles: formal, semi-formal (neutral) and informal.

**Formal register** is of precise, elevated, professional and impersonal nature and has a prescriptive format. The core characteristics of the formal register are the use of complete statements, the presence of standard vocabulary as well as academic lexis, absence of

contractions and exact pronunciation of words. The main target of this type of register is to inform the audience of a particular topic; thus, obviously there is a lack of personal speaker-listener interaction. Due to the following factors, this style of register is more common to be exploited in academic, scientific and legal contexts. The most common format for this register style is the speeches such as lectures, sermons, defense speeches, pronouncements made by judges and announcements. Below are the examples of formal register:

1. The police are conducting an investigation into the arms deal.

In this sentence, it can be observed that the formal phrases such as conduct and investigation and arms deal are used. Originally these words are of Greek origin which is typically deemed more formal. Moreover, there are no contracted forms. The sentence is constructed precisely.

2. Violence changed the face of once peaceful Swiss cities.

In this statement, formal words such as violence and peaceful are of use. The word face does not possess its literary meaning here, but expresses connotational and metaphorical meaning.

**Neutral or semi-formal register** is a conventional and non-emotional type of register. In most sources, it is also interpreted as the amalgamation of formal and informal registers so as to deliver the information or message to the addressee in a straightforward way. It is majorly witnessed in technical writings. Reviews, business plans, marketing presentations and some sorts of essays or letters are written in neutral style. The frequent use of passive voice is the most peculiar feature of neutral register. There is the example of the neutral language:

1. The police are looking into the arms deal.
2. Do not get off the bus until it stops.

Owing to the fact that there is the use of common standard vocabulary, neutral language is evident in these sentences. These statements do not have any complex grammar patterns and overly biased or fierce lexicon as the main feature of the neutral register is the absence of complexity, but the presence of simplicity.

## INFORMAL REGISTER

As the name suggests, this register style is imprecise in nature and conversational in tone. It is also termed as casual register. This register type is commonplace in the circles of acquaintances, friends, family members or co-workers in purely social setting. Like the other register styles, casual register can be characterized by the differences in vocabulary and syntax. Lexical features of informal register entail varied slangs,

clichés, jokes, vulgarities, colloquialisms, expletives, off-color language and figurative language. Meanwhile, grammatical characteristics of casual register are the existence of vernacular grammar, incomplete sentence structures, nonstandard grammatical forms, short sentences, abbreviations and contractions. In informal register, both passive and active voice as well as all of the forms of person can be utilized. Unlike formal register, informal register is rooted with Anglo-Saxon or Germanic words. Casual register style is primarily used in semi-public or public contents. It is majorly seen in personal e-mails, phone texts, blogs, diaries, short notes or friendly letters. Some of the statements where casual register is apparent are demonstrated below:

1. The cops are trying to dig out info about arms deal.

In this sentence, the phrasal verb “dig out” is in informal sense. The term “cops” is the slang expression of the word “police”.

2. The party was well good.

In the second sentence, “well” is used as an informal word with the meaning “very/really”. It is commonly used amongst the younger speakers.

Apart from the above enumerated styles of register, such types of register as static, consultative and intimate exist, too. Thus, it is of significance to touch upon them in meticulous details.

### **Static or frozen register**

Frozen register is also coined as static register and ritualistic speech used in mainly public situations. It is due to the fact that this tenor of register describes entirely formalized and recited speech. Because of custom and etiquette, static speech never changes over time or hardly ever changes. Pledges of allegiance, prayers, biblical quotations, wedding rows and the Preamble to the US Constitution are the common examples of frozen register.

### **Consultative register**

Another widely recognized style of register is consultative register which encourages two-way participation. It is counted to be a professional discourse where communications go on between two parties: teacher and student, doctor and patient, lawyer and client and many others. The tone of speech is usually respectful and courteous. Since there is unplanned conversation, pauses and interruptions tend to occur a lot.

### **Intimate or vulgar register**

Intimate register describes personally emotional and empathetic speech that is reserved for mutual friends, close-knit family members as well as intimate people such as husband and

wife, romantic partners, parents and children or siblings. In this tenor, communication is usually private and best avoided in public and professional settings. This type of register might employ private vocabulary, non-verbal messages, jokes, standard and non-standard forms of grammar.

It is crucial to bear in mind that the use of the following styles of register depends on several factors. They are as follows:

- Audience: it answers the question who the addressee of the conversation is and who is being talked to (friends, strangers, teacher, figures of authority)
- Topic: it is related to the content of the discourse or to say, what the parties are talking about (business, sport, fashion, celebrities)
- Purpose: it stands for the intentions of speakers and how the participants intent to communicate (in person, in public, in messaging, in a letter)
- Location: it describes where a discourse is taking place (in a lecture room, in a hospital, in a church, in a house)

## CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, register is the vital language variety and properly that one should acquire the knowledge of. Registers can be differentiated both in lexis and grammar. The field, mode and style of discourse are the primary features of language register. Other than this, there are six major tenors or styles of register in terms of formal, neutral, informal, frozen, intimate and consultative which vary from one another with such factors as audience, topic, purpose and location. All things considered, obtaining the apprehension of what the various registers are, how to differentiate between them and in what situations to use them can undoubtedly foster the chances of being accepted in a wide diversity of contexts.

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