Language Registers
Formal, Casual, Frozen

Within linguistics, a register is a subset of a language used for a particular purpose or social setting. The term register was first used by linguist (language expert) Thomas Reid in 1956 to describe the different forms of speech and writing.

Frozen: (Static) Printed language that does not change. The frozen register is found in published works and historical and religious documents. Examples- The Pledge of Allegiance, The Declaration of Independence, Bible quotations

Formal: Complete sentences standard for work, business, and academia. The formal register is an uninterrupted one way participation of speech and writing often using technical vocabulary. Examples- a speech, an editorial.

Consultative: The formal register as used in conversation. The consultative register is a two way participation of speech standard for work, business, and academia. In this register background technical information is provided and interruptions are allowed. Also backchannel behavior such as “uh huh” and “I see” are common. Examples- speaking to a supervisor, colleague, assistant in a formal setting.

Casual: Language used in conversation with friends. The casual register is a two way participation of speech characterized by slang, ellipsis, and non-verbal assists (body language). Interruptions are very common.

Intimate: Communication between loved ones. Within the private intimate register, intonation is more important than wording and grammar. Incidentally, this register is also associated with the language of sexual harassment.

Sentence Types

The English language has four different “sentence types,” including declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory.

Declarative: makes a statement and ends with a period; an observation.
I will graduate.

Interrogative: ask a question and ends with a question mark.
Will you graduate?

Imperative: gives a command.
You must graduate.

Exclamatory: shows strong feeling and ends with an exclamation mark.
We just graduated!