

THE ROLE OF THE SPEECH SITUATION IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL SPEECH

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Annotation

the role of the speech situation in shaping formal and informal speech in the Uzbek language is investigated in this article. A speech situation is defined as the combination of extralinguistic factors – including the participants' social status, communicative intentions, interpersonal relationships, and the context of interaction – that influence the form and content of utterances. The research focuses on how these factors are reflected linguistically in different registers of speech. Formal speech, typically used in hierarchical or institutional contexts, relies on honorifics, polite expressions, and carefully structured syntax to convey respect and maintain social norms. In contrast, informal speech, used in egalitarian or intimate contexts, favors kinship terms, casual expressions, humor, and relaxed grammatical structures to signal solidarity and closeness. By analyzing authentic spoken and written examples, the study demonstrates that the speech situation plays a crucial role in determining pragmatic choices and ensuring culturally appropriate communication. These findings have practical implications for language teaching, intercultural communication, and the study of pragmatics in Uzbek.

Key words

speech situation, formal speech, informal speech, pragmatics, Uzbek language, politeness, honorifics, social context, register, discourse.

In modern linguistics, the study of language in context has become central to understanding communication, as meaning is not determined solely by grammatical or lexical forms but also by the social and situational environment in which language is used. One of the key concepts in this area is the **speech situation**, which encompasses a combination of extralinguistic factors such as the participants' social status, communicative intentions, interpersonal relationships, cultural norms, and the temporal and spatial conditions of interaction. The speech

situation shapes how speakers choose linguistic forms, adapt their messages, and convey meaning appropriately within a given context.

In the Uzbek language, the distinction between formal and informal speech reflects the significant role of speech situations in regulating communication. Formal speech, used in hierarchical, institutional, or official contexts, relies on honorifics, polite expressions, and carefully structured utterances to convey respect and maintain social harmony. Informal speech, in contrast, is typical in egalitarian, intimate, or casual settings, employing kinship terms, colloquial expressions, humor, and relaxed grammatical structures to signal solidarity and emotional closeness.

This study aims to examine the role of the speech situation in shaping formal and informal speech in Uzbek, analyzing the linguistic means by which speakers adapt their language to different social contexts. Understanding these mechanisms contributes to a deeper knowledge of Uzbek pragmatic norms and offers practical insights for language teaching, intercultural communication, and discourse analysis.

The concept of the speech situation has been central to pragmatic studies, highlighting the interplay between linguistic choices and extralinguistic context. Levinson defines pragmatics as the study of relations between language and context, emphasizing that meaning is determined not only by words and grammar but also by the social and situational environment in which they occur [1; 3-5]. Yule further stresses that understanding speech acts requires examining who is communicating, the relationship between participants, and the circumstances of interaction [2; 21-25]. These foundational works provide a theoretical basis for analyzing how different contexts influence linguistic behavior.

Politeness theory, introduced by Brown and Levinson, demonstrates how social hierarchy, power relations, and cultural norms shape communication strategies, particularly in the use of honorifics, mitigated speech acts, and forms of address [3; 61-68]. Such mechanisms are essential for regulating face-threatening acts and maintaining social harmony, which is especially relevant when distinguishing between formal and informal speech registers.

Within Uzbek linguistics, researchers have emphasized the influence of national culture, social hierarchy, and etiquette on speech behavior. Saidov notes that Uzbek communication is strongly guided by respect for elders, teachers, and authority figures, and that honorific forms and formal expressions are systematically used in official and hierarchical contexts [4; 37-45]. Conversely, informal and egalitarian interactions employ kinship terms, diminutives, colloquial

expressions, and humor to signal solidarity, familiarity, and emotional closeness. Despite existing studies on speech culture, comprehensive analyses of how speech situations shape formal and informal speech in Uzbek remain limited, highlighting the relevance and necessity of the present research.

Overall, existing literature confirms that the **speech situation plays a critical role in determining linguistic choices**, regulating interaction, and reflecting social norms. However, most studies either focus on general pragmatics or on individual aspects of Uzbek speech culture, leaving a gap in the systematic analysis of the differences between formal and informal speech registers in various communicative contexts.

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach to examine how speech situations influence formal and informal speech in Uzbek. The data were collected from authentic spoken and written sources, including recorded conversations, interviews, literary texts, media publications, and educational materials, representing a variety of communicative contexts. These sources were chosen to capture differences in hierarchical, egalitarian, formal, and informal interactions.

The data were systematically analyzed according to pragmatic functions, including signaling respect, authority, solidarity, politeness, and emotional attitude. Special attention was paid to:

- Forms of address (honorifics, kinship terms, first names)
- Politeness strategies (direct and indirect speech acts, hedging, mitigated requests)
- Modal expressions and evaluative language
- Discourse markers and intonation patterns

A comparative analysis was conducted to identify patterns of variation between formal and informal contexts and to determine how linguistic choices correspond to participants' social status, hierarchical relationships, and situational conditions. This approach allows for a systematic description of how the speech situation is encoded in Uzbek linguistic behavior and reveals both culturally conventionalized patterns and context-specific adaptations.

The analysis shows that Uzbek pragmatic means are highly sensitive to speech situations and closely follow cultural norms. In formal or hierarchical contexts, such as interactions with elders, teachers, or officials, speakers predominantly use honorifics, formal address forms, and polite modifiers to convey respect, maintain social harmony, and reinforce authority structures. These strategies not only signal deference but also help mitigate face-threatening acts and regulate the social distance between participants.

In contrast, in informal, egalitarian, or intimate contexts, speakers frequently employ kinship terms, first names, casual expressions, diminutives, humor, and relaxed grammatical structures to express solidarity, emotional closeness, and familiarity. These choices also serve a pragmatic function by softening directives, emphasizing shared understanding, and reinforcing interpersonal bonds.

Politeness strategies, modal expressions, discourse markers, and intonation patterns further enhance context-appropriate communication by signaling interpersonal stance, aligning speakers with their audience, and clarifying the speaker's attitude toward the message. The findings indicate that Uzbek speakers continuously adjust their language according to the speech situation, balancing respect, solidarity, and efficiency.

Overall, the study demonstrates that formal and informal speech in Uzbek is a dynamic system, in which linguistic choices are shaped by cultural norms, social hierarchies, and situational variables. Mastery of these pragmatic strategies is essential for effective communication and reflects both linguistic competence and cultural awareness.

This study has examined the role of the speech situation in shaping formal and informal speech in the Uzbek language and analyzed the linguistic strategies that speakers employ to adapt to different social and situational contexts. The findings demonstrate that Uzbek speech is highly sensitive to context, and linguistic choices are systematically guided by social hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, cultural norms, and the level of formality.

In formal contexts, such as interactions with elders, teachers, or officials, speakers rely on honorifics, polite forms of address, and carefully structured expressions to convey respect, maintain social harmony, and uphold hierarchical relationships. In informal or egalitarian settings, speakers prefer kinship terms, first names, colloquial expressions, humor, and relaxed syntactic structures to signal solidarity, intimacy, and emotional closeness. Politeness strategies, modal expressions, discourse markers, and intonation patterns further reinforce the alignment between language and situational demands.

The study highlights that mastery of pragmatic means is essential not only for effective communication but also for navigating cultural expectations in Uzbek society. Understanding how speech situations influence formal and informal registers provides valuable insights for pragmatic theory, discourse analysis, language teaching, and intercultural communication, demonstrating the central role of situational awareness in achieving appropriate and meaningful interaction.

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