

Language Registers

Languages have **five (5) language registers**—five language styles. Both students and teachers need to know each of the five registers/styles because the appropriate use of language is a matter of situation. The use of the appropriate register depends on the audience, the topic, and the purpose for the communication (Joos, 1967). Most students write as they speak because they are not familiar with these registers. Teachers must familiarize themselves with these and teach the registers as an addition to the state framework.

Frozen Register: Pledge of Allegiance, Lord’s Prayer, Preamble to Constitution
(language that remains fixed/unchanged)

Formal/Academic Register: Interviews, academic language in classroom (lectures, instruction—mini-lessons), public speaking

Consultative Register: Talking to a boss/supervisor/teacher, lawyer, doctor, Counselor (asking for assistance)

Casual (Informal) Register: Talking with friends, slang (writing drafts should allow casual before the formal draft because it “gets the information out” on the paper)

Intimate Register: Language of lovers, sexual harassment (not for public information)

The Universal Rule: A person can go from one register to the next register without any conflicts whatsoever (casual to consultative...); however, if a person goes from one register to another register, skipping a level or more, this is considered anti-social behavior (i.e. moving from frozen to intimate, etc. marks a difference between a public voice and private voice).

Students must know how and when to move from one register to the next.