

TYPES OF FORMAL TEXTS

WHAT MAKES A TEXT FORMAL?

In all modes - less ambiguous

More cohesive – less spontaneity and its repercussions

It will make aspects of the presumed context more explicit

Writers and speakers are more likely to consider how their audience might interpret their message by packaging it appropriately.

Formal *written* texts are more likely to be edited

Formal *spoken* texts are more likely to be rehearsed

Speeches

Lectures

Oaths

Liturgies

Performances and monologues

FORMAL LANGUAGE IN SPOKEN TEXTS

SPEECHES

Syntax- parallelism, repetition, contrast and antithesis, listing, sentence length (short, direct and powerful), use of first and second person, interrogatives

Lexical features

- 1) Simple, monosyllabic vocabulary to be clear direct and forceful**
- 2) Elaborate, elevated vocabulary to add solemnity and weight to a speech or make it dramatic and uplifting**
- 3) Emotive vocabulary and hyperbole to move an audience**
- 4) Figurative language (similes and metaphors) to make a speech vivid and memorable**

Phonology- rhythmic (due to grammatical features), stress, intonation, alliteration and rhyme

LECTURES

Syntax-declarative sentence types with some imperatives. Sentences will be active. Sentences will be long. If read from an essay it will involve lots of complex sentence structures, if read from notes it will be looser in construction.

Lexis-subject specific. If the lecture is more personal, it will be similar to formal everyday usage, with some subject specific jargon.

Phonology- prosodic features will be used to add variety to the lecture and to capture the audience interest.

OATHS

An oath is either a statement of fact or a promise calling upon something or someone that the oath maker considers sacred, usually God, as a witness to the binding nature of the promise or the truth of the statement of fact. To swear is to take an oath, to make a solemn vow.

These are formulaic utterances: "I swear," but any statement or promise that includes "with * as my witness" or "so help me *," with '*'

Syntax- declarative sentence types, use of the present tense to indicate ongoing commitment to the statement

Lexis- Uses standard English.

LITURGIES

Liturgies are written to be read or sung. Types are; rosaries, hymns, prayers, psalms. There are a form of a polite plea addressed to the deity (God).

Lexis-subject specific (nouns like parables, disciples, verbs like pray and forgive). Adjectives used to describe the divine attributes.

Vocabulary can be archaic, many words are linked to a person or place with historical significance.

Formulaic openings and closings.

Formal phrases spoken directly to the congregation.

Antithesis is common. Non-count nouns (heaven, compassion) are common because of the abstract spiritual nature of religion

Symbolism is used (e.g. water to symbolise purity)

LITURGIES

Syntax –sentences often begin with vocatives (*Almighty God*), that are capitalised and in italics to indicate where the congregation join in and say ‘amen’

The sentence structures are complex; with dependent clauses and compound; to indicate a sense of balance and reason to the plea

Interrogatives and declaratives sentence types

PERFORMANCES AND MONOLOGUES

A monologue is a piece of writing that is produced by a single person

In theatrical or dramatic terms, it is a speech presented by a single character in a play, usually to express their thoughts aloud, though sometimes also to directly address another character or the audience. Often it can take the form of an extended 'aside', meant for the audience alone, and to which the other characters in the scene are not privy.

Older-style monologues from Shakespeare's time and earlier (ie ancient Greek tragedy and medieval theatre) have many of the features of formal speeches and literary texts. They used 'elevated or heightened language' (ie language not used in everyday speech that is often image-based and what we commonly call 'poetry').

PERFORMANCES AND MONOLOGUES

Modern monologues are more informal, more colloquial and 'conversational', and have many of the features of informal spoken discourse, such as non-fluency features. They may also use some literary features.

Phonological features of formal monologues may contain elements of rhythm and tempo based on the number of syllables per line. Many of Shakespeare's blank verse monologues (soliloquies) use the pentatonic metre (10 syllables per line)

FORMAL LANGUAGE IN WRITTEN TEXTS

Legal documents

Bureaucratic policies and procedures

Official documents

Informational prose

Literature

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Types- statutes, contracts, wills

Manner is formal, it is a traditional form of language that retains its archaic features. There are formulaic utterances that create a ceremonial tone.

Audience- it is a public form of language, but its audience is legal experts rather than the general public

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Lexis-subject specific jargon (tort, alibi, bail) and ordinary words interpreted differently depending on context (damage, valid, malice).

Archaic lexis (hereafter).

Collocations (shall it be deemed).

Synonyms are common reflecting the need to be all-inclusive.

Many abstract nouns used (evidence, policy) but few pre-modifiers. It is not concerned with the description or creation of mood. Pre and post-modifiers are used only when they are needed to provide exact factual information. Pronoun referencing is not often used to avoid ambiguity

. Limited use of verbs and the same ones used regularly (indemnify, be conveyed, accept). Lots of adverbials used, clustered at the beginning of a sentence.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Syntax-Almost always declarative sentence types used, although some imperatives. Interrogatives used in the spoken legal language of the courts.

Complex sentence types often used because the sentence has to provide precise information about the legal conditions attached to each transaction. Others sentences will be compound or compound-complex, few will be simple or incomplete. This is because all relevant information must be included in a single statement.

Sentences are self-contained units, they are not linked to what has come before or after, this makes anaphoric and cataphoric referencing less important and avoid ambiguity (legal loopholes).

Cohesion – created through the repetition of lexical sets

BUREAUCRATIC POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Examples are the 'Goldfields library rules of conduct'

**There is also an example in Living Lingo on page 100. and
email message. Also on page 118, 121 and 122**

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

An example is the preamble to the U.N Declaration of Human Rights

LITERATURE

Lexis-connotations of words are important. The writers choice of words helps to develop a consistent viewpoint. Informal, conversational language can be used to develop a more intimate relationship between narrator and reader. Use of figurative language and many adjectives and adverbs is common.

Syntax- sentence constructions are manipulated for particular purposes, for example repetition' parallelism and antithesis. Dialogue is used for characterisation, but is more organised with few non-fluency features.

LITERATURE

Syntax-word order and sentence construction are manipulated to achieve particular purposes. For example short, direct sentences can seem forceful and direct and work to invoke a particular atmosphere.

Positioning of the reader to respond to the views and values of the author is achieved through dialogue, imagery, symbolism, connotative words and tone of voice.

Repetition can be used to connect or highlight key points.

See document 'what to look for in narrative prose' by Sara Thorne