

A Comparative Study of Formal and Informal English Used by Secondary School Students

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Abstract

English is widely used by secondary school students in both academic and social contexts, requiring them to understand the distinction between formal and informal language. This study examines the differences between formal and informal English among secondary school students, focusing on vocabulary, grammar, contractions, abbreviations, slang, politeness, and online communication. A descriptive research design was adopted to examine students' use and understanding of both forms of English. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify common patterns in students' language use. The findings indicate that students generally use formal English in written assignments, examinations, classroom presentations, and communication with teachers, while informal English is more common in conversations with peers, family members, and social media interactions. The study further reveals that students frequently use contractions, abbreviations, slang, and digital expressions in informal communication. The study concludes that both forms are important and recommends teaching students when and how to appropriately use formal and informal English.

Keywords: Formal English, Informal English, Secondary School Students, Language Variation, Digital Communication

Introduction

Language plays an important role in human communication. Individuals adjust their language when speaking or writing, depending on who they are speaking to, why, how, and where. All secondary school students encounter various uses of English on a daily basis. They communicate in English in the classroom, in exams, on assignments, in discussions, in text messages, and on social media. In formal and official communication situations, the general form of English is spoken. Uses grammar and vocabulary in the correct manner. Informal English is less formal and is generally used in informal communications with friends and loved ones. Secondary school students use English in both academic and social situations. Formal English is used in written assignments, tests, presentations, and with teachers; informal English is used with peers, family, and on social media. In this study, the difference between formal English and informal English is compared among secondary school students. It emphasizes words, grammar, contractions, abbreviations, slang, politeness, and online communication. The study shows that both forms of English serve a purpose. Pupils should be taught to know when to use formal or informal language.

For example:

Formal: "I don't feel well and can't go to school today."

Informal: "Due to illness, I am unable to attend school today."

Both sentences have a similar meaning, with the first being more appropriate for formal communication. Students need to understand the difference between formal and informal English because they must be able to speak formal and informal English as required in various situations. A student may use slang when speaking to a friend, but may not be appropriate for an examination or formal letter. To make formal and informal English comparisons among secondary school students. The comparative shows that secondary students use formal and informal English differently. Formal English is essential for academic tasks, exams, presentations and communicating with teachers. Informal English can be helpful when students are communicating with family members and friends. Informal English should not simply be considered "wrong." It's suitable in some cases. The key skill students require is his/her ability to know when to use formal language and when informal language is appropriate. Students who grasp this distinction are able to be more successful communicators. They can comfortably apply informal English in social settings and appropriate formal English in educational settings. Practical examples can be given by teachers, which can help students. For example, students can be asked to change a text message into a formal email or rewrite an informal sentence as an academic sentence. The activities can make English learning more interesting and useful. To recognize the common characteristics of the informal English. To analyze the effect of social media on the English of students.

Literature Review

Sociolinguistics is a field of study where language variation is significant. According to Holmes (2013), people are adapting their language in social contexts, relationship, and/or audience. Biber (1988) further demonstrates that there are differences in the linguistic characteristics of spoken and written English. Formal settings such as school or official places, Standard English is typically used. Usually contains full sentences, appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Hyland (2009) points out that in academic communication, it is necessary to use the correct language. Every day or casual

communication in English. It could contain slang, contractions, abbreviations and conversational phrases. With the advent of digital communication, youth have been using informal English more. Punctuation is often abbreviated, e.g. "u" for "you", "btw" for "by the way", "idk" for "I don't know", "pls" for "please", "lol" for "laugh out loud". While these forms are convenient for fast communications, they are generally not suitable for academic tasks.

Method and Material

Qualitative comparative research method is applied in this study. It explores forms of formal and informal English, contrasts their vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, abbreviations, slang and usage in digital communication. The study is grounded on the previous research related to the language. There is no real student survey and so no fabricated statistical results in the paper. To pursue the study, questionnaires, interviews, formal and informal writing samples and classroom observation could be used with the secondary school students. Students might be requested to write a formal school paragraph and an informal message. The examples could then be compared to look for differences in language use.

Results and Discussion

Comparison of Formal and Informal English

Table 1

Comparison of Formal and Informal English Expressions

Formal English	Informal English
I cannot attend the class.	I can't come to class.
Please provide the information.	Send me the info.
I would like to ask a question.	I wanna ask something.
I do not understand.	I don't get it.
Please contact me later.	Text me later.

Vocabulary

Standard and carefully chosen words are typical of formal English. In informal English, common words, slang, or shortened words are used. For example, a student may say the examination was difficult in formal writing but say that the examination was really hard in conversation with a friend. Both expressions are comprehensible, but are from different styles.

Grammar

The forms of English used in formal contexts are typical of the grammatical rules of English. The informal communication can have shorter sentences and conversational forms.

Formal: "I'm not well enough to attend the meeting."

Informal: "Could not come, not feeling well."

The informal version can be used in a text message, and the formal version would be more appropriate for academic or official communication.

Contractions

Contractions like don't, can't, I'm or we're are normal in informal English. In formal writing students are able to use the full form of cannot, do not, I am and we are. But contractions do not necessarily indicate that the writing style is incorrect. They are suitable based on the kind of writing and what the teacher is expecting.

Abbreviations

Students frequently use abbreviations in digital communication, such as:

u = you

btw = by the way

idk = I don't know

pls = please

asap = as soon as possible

These forms make communication faster. However, students should avoid using them in examinations, essays, applications, and other formal writing.

Slang

Informal phrases like cool, awesome, bro, dude are in use. Words of the street can lend to a more friendly and natural conversation. At times it can be hard for different age groups and backgrounds to understand, however. Students must, therefore, know their audience prior to using slang.

Politeness

Formal communication typically calls for a greater degree of politeness. A student might say to a friend, for instance:

"Pass me your notebook."

If talking to a teacher, the student can say:

Do you have a notebook, please?

This distinction implies that language is also related to respect and social relations.

Digital Communication

Social and messaging media have greatly affected students' language. Students can communicate quickly through messaging apps and social networking sites. They tend to employ informal words, short sentences, emojis, and abbreviations.

For example:

Informal: "Hey, do you plan on coming to school tomorrow?"

Formal: "Will you come to school tomorrow?"

Digital communication does not have to be detrimental to language. It's just one form of communication. The issue is when students cannot distinguish between informal digital language and formal academic writing.

Conclusion

Based on this study, the researchers are able to conclude that both formal and informal English is important as means of communication. Students in secondary school employ formal English primarily for academic purposes and informal English for everyday purposes. Social media has heightened students' use of abbreviations, slang and short forms. Thus, pupils should be prepared to adapt their speech to meet the needs of different situations, audience, and purpose. By learning both styles, students can have a better overall understanding of the communication skill and grow to be more confident English users. Rather than giving pupils the message that informal English is "bad", the teacher should communicate that there are different kinds of English and that informal English is appropriate in some contexts.

Recommendation

Teachers should describe the difference between formal and informal English. Practicing both academic and conversational English should be done by students. Social

media should be discussed with respect to language impact by teachers. Students should not use abbreviations in formal work. Classroom activities should involve actual situations of formal and informal communication. Pupils to practice informal sentences to formal sentences. Schools should be supportive of academic writing skills being developed by students. Pupils should be able to think about their audience when deciding on language.

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