A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL DIALOGIC DISCOURSE IN ENGLISH AND AZERBAIJANI

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Formal and informal dialogic discourses are among the principal forms of communication that represent different models of social relations within the socio-communicative system of language. These types of discourse reflect not only the structural features of language but also the integration of social roles, ethical norms, and cultural codes into linguistic interaction. The formation of dialogic discourse in English and Azerbaijani is determined by the choice of politeness strategies, speech acts, and contextual markers. While institutional norms, formal address forms, and a model of social distance prevail in formal discourse, proximity, spontaneity, and emotional expressiveness are more prominently observed in informal discourse. These differences clearly demonstrate how communicative purposes, degrees of social relations, and social hierarchy are encoded through linguistic means in both languages.
Keywords: *dialogic discourse, formal style, informal communication, pragmatics, speech act, politeness strategy, context, social distance.*

ПОРІВНЯЛЬНЕ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ ФОРМАЛЬНОГО ТА НЕФОРМАЛЬНОГО ДІАЛОГІЧНОГО ДИСКУРСУ В АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ ТА АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКІЙ МОВАХ

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Формальний і неформальний діалогічний дискурс є основними формами комунікації, що відображають різні моделі соціальних взаємин у соціально-комунікативній системі мови. Ці типи дискурсу репрезентують не лише структурні особливості мови, а й інтеграцію соціальних ролей, етичних норм та культурних кодів у мовну практику. Формування діалогічного дискурсу в англійській та азербайджанській мовах визначається вибором стратегій ввічливості, мовленнєвих актів і контекстуальних маркерів. У формальному дискурсі домінують інституційні норми, офіційні форми звертання та модель дистанційованого спілкування, тоді як у неформальному дискурсі більш виразно проявляються близькість, спонтанність і емоційна експресивність. Ці відмінності наочно демонструють, яким

чином комунікативні цілі, ступінь взаємин і соціальна ієрархія кодуються мовними засобами в обох мовах.

Ключові слова: *діалогічний дискурс, формальний стиль, неформальне спілкування, прагматика, мовленнєвий акт, стратегія ввічливості, контекст, соціальна дистанція.*

Research Methods. The study employs discursive-pragmatic analysis, speech act theory and politeness strategy models as the main methodological framework for the comparative analysis of formal and informal dialogic discourse. In addition contrastive-linguistic and contextual interpretation methods are applied to literary and everyday speech data in English and Azerbaijani.

Introduction. Dialogic discourse occupies a central position in interaction-based communicative processes as a fundamental pragmatic unit that ensures the functioning of live verbal communication. This unit reflects not only the structural properties of speech acts but also the social roles, communicative intentions of the interlocutors and the situational context in which communication takes place. In contemporary linguistics, the study of dialogic discourse is not limited to syntactic and lexical levels; it also encompasses socio-psychological factors such as interpersonal relations, emotional responses and culturally conditioned behavioral patterns. This approach allows dialogic discourse to be evaluated as a dynamic phenomenon that demonstrates the functional flexibility of language and its interaction with society.

The distinction between formal and informal dialogues essentially reflects the nature of interpersonal relations, the degree of social distance and communicative intention. Formal discourse is typically associated with official situations, differences in social status and ethical constraints, whereas informal discourse emerges in conditions of emotional proximity, equality and free communicative interaction. As noted in linguistic research, *the category of formality is linked to the opposition between personality-oriented and status-oriented discourse*. Personality-oriented discourse refers to communication among individuals who are familiar with one another and willing to share their inner world. It manifests in two forms: everyday discourse, characterized by the use of a reduced communicative code in which interlocutors "understand each other from half a word" and existential discourse, whose aim is to search for existing meanings and to experience them through artistic and philosophical comprehension of the world (PISC, 2018: 25).

The successful construction of dialogic discourse depends not only on the structural features of language but also on the extent to which speakers adhere to norms of speech etiquette. Although ethical rules are manifested differently in formal and informal communication models, in both cases the primary goal is to maintain mutual understanding and communicative harmony. Speech etiquette endows speech acts with cultural and social dimensions, enabling speakers to convey their intentions accurately and appropriately. In this respect, it is emphasized that *"the connection between speech etiquette and the communicative process is indisputable and without its elements no conversation can take place. By observing the rules of speech etiquette, speakers are able to convey their thoughts to their interlocutors more effectively and achieve their communicative goals more efficiently"* (Ismayilova, 2022: 46).

This theoretical perspective demonstrates that principles of speech etiquette are realized in a language-specific manner within each discourse system and constitute the foundation of formal—informal communication distinctions. English and Azerbaijani provide an illustrative basis for comparison in this respect: the former relies predominantly on indirectness and the protection of individual boundaries, whereas the latter is grounded in emotional proximity and relationship-oriented interaction. Formal discourse represents a mode of communication in which speech acts are structured more rigidly and social distance is preserved. In English such discourse is characterized by the dominance of modal verb constructions, through which the speaker's intention is expressed not as a direct command but at the level of illocutionary indirectness.

In Azerbaijani, by contrast, formal discourse is more commonly realized through explicit formulas of respect, for example: *"Zəhmət olmasa, hesabatı sabaha qədər göndərin; Sizə təşəkkür edirəm, iştirakınız bizim üçün vacibdir."* *("Please send the report by tomorrow; Thank you; your participation is very important to us.")*

In these examples politeness functions as a positive strategy, manifested through the direct expression of respect. This feature reflects the relationship-oriented nature of Azerbaijani communicative culture, where maintaining interpersonal harmony and expressing consideration take precedence in formal interaction.

At the level of literary discourse, this distinction becomes even more apparent.

"— Tom! ... No answer.

— Tom! ... Not a sound.

— How very strange! I wonder where the boy has gone. Tom!

— Tell me, what were you doing there?

— Nothing.

— Nothing? Just look at your hands and your mouth. What is that?

— I don't know, Aunt.

— But I know. It's jam — jam, do you understand?" (Twain, 2005: 12–13)

This dialogue begins within the framework of formal control discourse, since Aunt Polly occupies a dominant position in the family as an elder authority figure. She constructs her speech acts through syntactic structures that perform interrogative, supervisory and disciplinary functions *("Tell me...", "What is that?"). In the English original ("What have you been doing there, Tom?" / "Nothing, Aunt Polly." / "Nothing! Look at your hands!"*), pragmatic pressure is created through intonation and stress.

The informal element emerges through Tom's ironic defensive strategy: the child indirectly denies responsibility ("Nothing") and does not adhere to the aunt's politeness formulas. According to Brown and Levinson's *face-threatening act* model, this behavior may be interpreted as a form of resistance rhetoric characteristic of a lower-status participant.

In the Azerbaijani translation, this conflict is intensified through emotionally charged language: expressions such as *"Ay sənə nə deyim!"* preserve both criticism and compassion within the framework of positive politeness strategies. Thus, the same discourse is structured around control and distance in English, whereas in Azerbaijani it is built upon compassion and familial closeness.

"Ben said:

— Well, buddy, looks like you have to work, huh?

Tom replied:

— What do you call work?

— Don't you think this is work?

— I don't know, maybe it is work, maybe it isn't! All I know is that it comes straight from Tom Sawyer's heart." (Twain, 2005: 19)

This dialogue represents a classic example of informal friendship discourse, clearly demonstrating the pragmatic characteristics of communication between children of equal social status. The absence of hierarchical difference ensures structural flexibility in discourse, allowing communicative strategies to develop around humor, irony and rhetorical questions rather than institutional control mechanisms. In such discourse, the goal is not

merely information exchange but also influencing the interlocutor's behavior and reshaping the situation to one's advantage.

Tom's communicative strategy directly serves this pragmatic goal. He does not openly express his intention to avoid labor; instead, he resorts to discursive manipulation, presenting work as a game or a rare opportunity. In doing so, Tom masks his illocutionary goal (avoiding work) at the locutionary level with positive semantic content, attempting to alter the interlocutor's motivation. Rhetorical questions and ironic expressions function as attention-attracting and manipulative tools within the discourse.

Within Russian linguistic tradition, formal and informal speech are viewed as functional discourse types reflecting social distance, status relations and communicative intentions. Formal speech is primarily associated with institutional communication and is characterized by normative linguistic units, standard syntactic patterns and formal address forms. Informal speech, by contrast, emerges in contexts of interpersonal closeness, emotional expressiveness, and spontaneous interaction, relying heavily on colloquial elements, evaluative vocabulary and situational context. Discourse studies based on Russian language data demonstrate that the distinction between formal and informal speech is determined less by structural linguistic features than by cultural-pragmatic norms and social behavior models.

From a pragmatic perspective, this dialogue embodies the core features of informal discourse spontaneity, playfulness and strategic improvisation. Emotional closeness and shared social context enhance the sincerity of interaction, while simultaneously enabling manipulation to occur within a "safe" and socially acceptable framework. Thus, the dialogue reflects not only friendship relations but also illustrates how informal discourse functions as an effective pragmatic mechanism for guiding human behavior (Terkourafi, 2019).

In the English original, the sentence *"Does a boy get a chance to whitewash a fence every day?"* carries particular pragmatic value: the illocutionary goal (avoiding work) is indirectly reframed as a positive presentation. Tom ironically portrays the task as a rare privilege, thereby reshaping Ben's motivation.

In the Azerbaijani translation, this pragmatic intention is preserved, but emotional and intonational expressiveness is intensified: *"Nə bilim, bəlkə işdir, bəlkə də heç iş deyil!"* Here, ambiguity conceals the speaker's intent, while rhythmic repetition (*bəlkə... bəlkə də...*) lends natural conversational melody to the utterance.

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Informal discourse is built upon spontaneity, proximity and emotional sharing. In English, this style dominates everyday speech:

"Hey, what's up?"

"Wanna grab a coffee?"

Elliptical sentences, slang and contracted forms signal communication beyond formal constraints.

At the pragmatic level although speakers may frame notions of time and selfhood through rational and formal judgments, the overall tone of discourse is softened by intimacy characteristic of father–son relationships. This mitigates communicative tension and prevents disagreement from escalating into conflict (Spencer-Oatey & Кбдбг, 2021). This feature highlights the humanistic foundation of informal discourse in Azerbaijani: even in the presence of divergent viewpoints, communicative ethics are balanced through respect, humor and emotional equilibrium. Consequently, informal discourse functions not only as an informational medium but also as a pragmatic mechanism that preserves and reinforces social relationships.

According to Brown and Levinson's theory, politeness strategies are grounded in the principle of face protection (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In English discourse speakers frequently employ negative politeness strategies, for example: *"If it's not too much trouble, could you possibly…?"*

In Azerbaijani discourse, however, the primary aim is to gain face, that is, to establish positive relations and closeness: *"Əziz müəllim, zəhmət olmasa bu məsələni bir də izah edin."*

In Azerbaijani prose, writers such as Anar, Elchin and I. Efendiyev create transitional zones between formal and informal discourse types. For instance, the dialogue below represents a typical example in Anar's works where formal and informal discourse are intertwined, as it maintains a balance between philosophical reflection and a tone of sincere interpersonal communication.

"Elder man: "It seems the world has changed, Zaur. People have become strangers to one another."

Zaur: "Perhaps we ourselves have changed?"

Elder man: "No, my son. It is not we who have changed; it is time that has changed."

Zaur: "And who changes time?"

Elder man: "You, me — all of us…" (Anar, 2004: 63)

This dialogue belongs to the philosophical-formal discourse type. The speech acts are constructed on a metaphorical level, yet the interaction is

governed by mild politeness and status differentiation. The formal element is manifested in the address form *"my son"*, which preserves social hierarchy and functions as a marker of respect in Azerbaijani. The informal element appears in Zaur's reflective question (*"Perhaps we ourselves have changed?"*), which carries a friendly, dialogic character. Such rhetorical dialogue resembles the self-reflexive dialogic structures observed in English-language literary discourse.

Thus, in both languages, formal and informal discourse types reflect distinct cultural-pragmatic values: in one case, the priority lies in maintaining boundaries, while in the other, in strengthening interpersonal relations.

Results and Discussion. Formal and informal dialogic discourses in both languages function as key mechanisms for encoding social distance, degrees of interpersonal relations and communicative intentions through linguistic means.

In English formal discourse indirectness, modal constructions and negative politeness strategies predominate, whereas in Azerbaijani formal communication greater emphasis is placed on explicit respect formulas and positive politeness strategies.

In informal discourse English is characterized by laconic, elliptical structures and a relatively neutral emotional tone, while Azerbaijani exhibits greater spontaneity, emotional expressiveness, and relationship-oriented interaction.

Literary discourse examples demonstrate that formal and informal dialogues perform important pragmatic functions in revealing characters' social status, psychological states and ideological positions.

Cultural codes and norms of speech etiquette play a more decisive role than structural linguistic features in shaping dialogic discourse patterns.

Conclusion. Formal and informal dialogic discourses in English and Azerbaijani reflect different socio-cultural systems as manifested through language. The indirectness and neutral politeness strategies typical of English discourse are oriented toward the protection of individual boundaries, whereas Azerbaijani discourse, through its emotionally expressive and relationship-oriented nature, serves to reinforce social solidarity. In the literary discourse of both languages, these differences emerge as significant pragmatic indicators that shape the social positioning, ideological affiliation and psychological depth of literary characters. Consequently, the comparative analysis of formal and informal dialogues reveals not merely the structural-semantic features of language, but more importantly, its social-functional essence.

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