The way in which a person expresses themselves changes depending on who they are, who they are addressing and the purpose of the text. These changes in the author’s language relate to register, style and tone.

**Register**
is the variety of language used by speakers and writers in a particular social context or in a particular type of text. It often reflects the social status of a person and there are rules about which register is appropriate in specific settings (formality):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>register</th>
<th>example</th>
<th>communicative situation</th>
<th>features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| frozen static    | *I, William, take you, Catherine, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death do us part.* | usually used for very old pieces of discourse, such as wedding vows, readings from holy texts, Shakespearean plays, the Pledge of Allegiance, or legal texts | ▪ wording never changes, is frozen in time and content  
▪ archaisms  
▪ standardised grammar |
| formal           | *Man: Good afternoon, how are you doing today?  
Woman: I’m very well, thank you for asking. And yourself?  
Man: I’m doing well, thank you. I wanted to talk to you about the upcoming project we’ve been working on. I think it’s important that we sit down and discuss our progress.  
Woman: Yes, I agree. I think it would be a good idea to schedule a meeting and go over our findings thus far.  
Man: That’s a great suggestion.* | used in formal settings and one-way in nature; it follows a commonly accepted format, e.g. formal letters, speeches, sermons, announcements and pronouncements by judges | ▪ formal expressions  
▪ technical terms  
▪ exact definitions  
▪ loanwords  
▪ objectivity  
▪ politeness  
▪ complex sentence structure  
▪ standardised grammar  
▪ background information is provided  
▪ interruptions are allowed  
▪ back-channel behaviour is common (*'uh huh’, ‘I see’*) |
| consultative     | *Man: Hello, how are you doing today?  
Woman: I’m doing well, thank you. How are you?  
Man: I’m good, thank you for asking. I was wondering if we could set up a meeting to discuss our progress on the project? I think it’s important that we look forward to meeting you tomorrow.  
Kind regards,  
Kate* | is a standard form of communication – users engage in a mutually accepted structure and fulfil societal expectations, e.g. professional discourse, meeting strangers, | ▪ background information is provided  
▪ interruptions are allowed  
▪ back-channel behaviour is common (*'uh huh’, ‘I see’*) |
**The language of a text – register, style and tone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Register</th>
<th>Communication example</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **informal casual** | **Man:** Hey, what’s up? How’s your day going?  
**Woman:** Hey, I’m doing great, thanks! And yourself?  
**Man:** I’m good, thanks. Listen, I was thinking maybe we could get together and chat about how the project’s going. It’d be cool to bounce ideas off each other and see where we’re at.  
**Woman:** Yeah, totally! That sounds like a great plan. | - standardised grammar, spelling and punctuation  
- informal and colloquial expressions, sometimes even slang or rude language  
- ellipsis and interruptions common  
- contractions  
- grammar, spelling and punctuation not necessarily standard  
- subjectivity  
- simple sentence structure  
- “everyday language” |
| **intimate**      | **Man:** Hey, babe. I’ve been thinking about that project we discussed earlier. I can’t help but imagine how amazing it would be if we worked on it together. What do you say?  
**Woman:** Oh, honey, you read my mind! I’ve been yearning for a chance to collaborate with you on something meaningful. Count me in! So, tell me more about the project. What’s your vision? | - intonation is more important than wording or grammar  
- endearments common  
- includes non-verbal messages |

Please note:  
There are no clear boundaries between the different registers. A speaker can transit from one to an adjacent one. However, skipping one or more levels is often considered inappropriate or even offensive.
### Style

is the way in which the text is written to fit a specific purpose. It includes choice of words, use of grammar, sentence structure and layout depending on the purpose of the text. There are four main writing styles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Features</th>
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</table>
| narrative  | "The sun hung low in the sky, casting a golden hue over the quiet town. I skipped down the cobblestone streets, my pigtailed bouncy with each joyful step. As I passed by the old bookstore, a tattered book caught my eye in the display window. My curiosity piqued, I pressed my nose against the glass, longing to explore the secrets hidden within those yellowed pages. With a determined gleam in my eyes, I vowed to find a way to unravel the mysteries locked away in that forgotten tome, and embark on an unforgettable adventure." | ▪ to tell a story  
▪ often: 1st person narration  
▪ examples: in literary texts (novels, screenplays) and non-literary texts (speeches, autobiographies)  
▪ choice of register is dependent on the context of the story |
| persuasive | "Switch to renewable energy for a cleaner, greener future. Together, let's make a positive impact on the planet." | ▪ used to persuade others of your ideas and thoughts  
▪ used to convince others to change their behaviour somehow  
▪ examples: advertisements, cover letters, persuasive essays  
▪ choice of register depends on intended effect on reader |
| descriptive | "The sun set, painting the sky with warm hues. A gentle breeze whispered through the trees, carrying the fragrance of blooming flowers. Every step on the soft earth brought a sense of tranquility, as nature whispered its secrets of serenity." | ▪ aims at ‘painting a picture’ for the reader  
▪ wants to entertain the reader  
▪ often contains figurative and decorative language  
▪ examples: poetry, song lyrics, short stories  
▪ register depends on the context of the text |
| expository | "Solar energy harnesses the sun’s rays to generate clean electricity. It offers cost savings, reduces reliance on fossil fuels, and helps combat climate change. Embracing solar power is a step towards a greener and more sustainable future." | ▪ aim at explaining something to the reader  
▪ text should be clear, provide evidence (arguments, statistics, etc) and be concise  
▪ examples: ‘how to’ articles, textbooks, FAQ pages, business writing  
▪ usually: consultative register |
**Tone**

describes the atmosphere set by the author’s style and register. It can express the author’s attitude towards the subject of the text but is less about what the author feels and more about how the author wants the reader to feel.

Consider the two examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hermann Melville’s <em>Moby Dick</em> (1851)</th>
<th>Charles Dickens’ <em>A Tale of Two Cities</em> (1859)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What of it, if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Do you think the archangel Gabriel thinks anything the less of me, because I promptly and respectfully obey that old hunks in that particular instance? Who ain’t a slave? Tell me that. Well, then, however the old sea-captains may order me about—however they may thump and punch me about, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way—either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other’s shoulder-blades, and be content.</td>
<td>It was the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. Spiritual revelations were conceded to England at that favoured period, as at this. Mrs. Southcott had recently attained her five-and-twentieth blessed birthday, of whom a prophetic private in the Life Guards had heralded the sublime appearance by announcing that arrangements were made for the swallowing up of London and Westminster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Moby-Dick</em> has a hardscrabble tone befitting its setting: a whaling boat. The first-person narration contributes to this, as does the conversational style.</td>
<td>The overall tone in Dickens’ writing style signifies a serious, ornate piece of literature. Dickens favors a level of formality and eschews casual everyday language; this results in a text that has a grand, formal tone befitting its cosmopolitan setting. Both authors use rich, evocative language—yet there is something less formal and regal about Melville’s text. This kind of tone befits the rough and tumble setting of a whaling boat at sea, while the more formal tone of the Dickens befits his cosmopolitan settings of London and Paris.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The function of tone in a text is much like the effect of tone of voice or body language in spoken communication. The choice of tone depends on the effect the author wants to achieve and can be:

- cheerful
- light-hearted
- humorous
- assertive
- joyful
- appreciative
- hopeful
- ...  

- persuasive
- dry
- facetious
- arrogant
- inspirational
- reverent
- confused
- ...  

- regretful
- pessimistic
- nostalgic
- melancholic
- sarcastic
- uneasy
- regretful
- ...  

adapted from: https://www.masterclass.com/articles/examples-of-tone-words-in-writing# (June 4, 2023, 16:43)