

Research Paper

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN MASS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Language plays an important part in human life. Everyone makes use of it, be he a beggar or a king. From birth to death we are surrounded by it. Language is a means of communication it is the medium by which thoughts are conveyed from one person to another. Language is the flesh and blood of our culture. It is a means of social control and social change.

English occupies a place of prestige in our country. No indigenous language however has come up to replace English, either as a medium of communication or as an official language. Its knowledge is essential for higher legal, technical and scientific education and research in almost all branches of learning. It is also necessary for those writers who wish to reach a bigger audience, for diplomats, editors, lawyers, politicians in fact almost everyone under the sky.

Media today have an enormous impact. They have become so important that it is rarely that we can live without them. Mass Media does a superior job in reporting the news and informing the public. Media keep us informed about what is happening in the world, they extend our knowledge and deepen our understanding. Newspapers are easy to be brought in the class in different subjects and courses, especially in geography, history, literature, language classes, etc. Some of them have valuable information for these subjects. The Print Media i.e. Newspaper and Magazines are very much useful for material collection like choosing and collecting short articles, weather forecast, advertisements, headlines, etc. The aim of the broadcasts on Electronic Media i.e. Television, Radio, Mobile Phones and Internet is to help us become a more effective listener and reader in English.

This paper is an attempt to present the role of English Language in Mass Media at large. The study traces the use of Language in Mass Media i.e. Television, Radio, Internet, Mobile Phone, News Papers and magazines.

Language plays an important part in human life. Everyone makes use of it, be he a beggar or a king. From birth to death we are surrounded by it. Language is a means of communication it is the medium by which thoughts are conveyed from one person to another. Language is the flesh and blood of our culture. It is a means of social control and social change.

English occupies a place of prestige in our country. No indigenous language however has come up to replace English, either as a medium of communication or as an official language. Though Gandhiji was totally against English Education, but he also appreciated the importance of foreign language especially English. In his book, Young India he said:

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides

and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. I would have our young men and young women with literary tastes to learn as much of English and other world languages as they like and expect them to give the benefits of their learning to India and to the world”. 1

The knowledge of English will enable us to establish intellectual, cultural, economic, commercial and political relations with the rest of the world and its knowledge are essential for higher legal, technical and scientific education and research in almost all branches of learning.

Media today have an enormous impact. It enables everyone under the sky to speak out his /her thoughts and ideas effectively. They have become so important that it is rarely that we can live without them. Each of these experiences puts us in contact with a medium, or channel of communication. Radio, books, records and tapes, newspapers, magazines, movies, television, on-line media, new media, all these are called Mass Media, they reach many people at one time. Mass Media does a superior job in reporting the news and informing the public. Mass media provide students with a lot of language practice through activities using newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, movies, books, Internet, etc, and tasks which develop reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

Media keep us informed about what is happening in the world, they extend our knowledge and deepen our understanding. Nowadays the information is abundant, it comes through different sources, but we should try how to benefit from this information, how to learn about specific issues, how to become aware of problems, opportunities and resources, how to find issues we are interested in, how to identify the issues that have impact on us, etc.

Newspapers are easy to be brought in the class, home and everywhere we go in different languages, especially in school for gaining knowledge of geography, history, literature, language classes, etc. Some of them have valuable information for these subjects. People at home easily have access to learn the language and improve their vocabulary and reading ability daily just in 3 Rupees. It enhances their knowledge, keeps the people well informed and updated. It is worth to get access to wide understanding

of English language and acquiring fluency in English language speaking, which is very difficult to learn in the English Speaking courses which are available in full swing all around.

The Print Media i.e. Newspaper and Magazines are very much useful for material collection like choosing and collecting short articles, weather forecast, advertisements, headlines, etc. The aim of the broadcasts on Electronic Media i.e. Television, Radio, Mobile Phones and Internet is to help us become a more effective listener and reader in English.

The role of Language in the Mass Media i.e. Television, Radio, Internet, Mobile Phone, News Papers and magazines are as important as blood in human body. I have analysed and tried to throw light on the role of Language in Mass Media at large.

1. **The language of the Talk-Shows/Debates:**

There are many Talk-Shows and Debates on the television, mainly on the news channels like NDTV Profit, NDTV Good Times, NDTV 24x7, Star News, CNN IBN, etc. These talk-shows are mainly by the experts who are called on television to solve the problems of the masses may be on the topics like corruption, beauty enhancing/grooming, fitness and diet, business, movies, entertainment, etc. We can even witness the Debates on Television which calls for a group of experts with opposition of views and try to give us both the negative and positive views and helps us to have an expertise view on different topics by expert people of different fields. The most popular Debates are 'We the People' and 'The Big Fight' on NDTV. For example: The Topic for Debate was “The Double Standards” which was telecast on Sunday the 23rd January 2011 on NDTV.

- 1. Do women face double standards?
- 2. Do men have more leeway on morality?
- 2. The language of headlines:

The headline of a news story is the short summary which introduces the story at the beginning of news or which appears above articles in a newspaper or on a website.

The following headlines all appeared on the NDTV 24x7 News on 23rd January 2011.

- 1. Pranab slams opposition on stalling Parliament: Join Maoists if no faith in Democracy.
- 2. PM on BJP Yatra: Republic Day is not an occasion to score political points or promote divisive agendas.
- 3. ULFE Cadres killed: Two ULFA cadres killed in Doomdooma; 2 pistols and 3 grenades found.
- 4. Yeddurappa to NDTV: Governor is behaving like a Congress Agent.
- 5. Malnutrition in the heart of Delhi

The following headlines are from the Newspaper and Magazine:

- 1. Who Killed Aarushi? Lost CBI closes Case. (The Times of India, 30th Dec 2010)
- 2. BMC's flip – flop could cost city an open space. (The Times of India, 30th Dec 2010)
- 3. I have fought the good fight! (Jesus Calls- May 2007)
- 4. The Lord who dwells with us. (Jesus Calls- May 2007)

The aim of a news headline is to grab your attention. Therefore, any 'unnecessary' words are often left out. These include:

- Articles: The space station has been hit by a hitch.

- Auxiliary verbs: The space station has been hit by a hitch.

- Possessive adjectives: Gore has pinned his hopes on the Florida Court.

- Verb forms: News broadcasts and newspapers are designed to make you think that news stories are happening. Changing the forms of the verbs in the Head lines is used to indicate that something happened very recently.

- Present simple: Gore pins hopes on the Florida Court. The present simple tense in the headline replaces the present perfect simple or the past simple tense in the news story. The effect is to say that the story is happening now rather than in the very recent past.

- Infinitives: Beckham to reject £80,000 a week. When the story refers to the future plans of the subject, the headline usually uses a verb in the infinitive form. The headline above is a shortened from of the sentence: David Beckham is going to reject the new, improved contract which has been offered to him.

- Past participles: University attacked over tobacco money. The full form of this headline should read: The University was attacked over the tobacco money. When the passive voice is used in a headline, it is usually just the past participle form which appears. Auxiliaries verbs make the headline long and detract from the immediacy.

1. **The language of holiday programmes:**

A travelogue is the description of someone's travel experiences, often told while the person is on the journey. On the radio and TV, you can often hear and see the three different types of travelogue. Some are descriptions of difficult journeys told by news reporters or correspondents. Others, however, are descriptions of holidays by presenters, designed to encourage the listener to visit the place being described and the Hosts taking you around the journey, while you are sitting at home.

Read the extract given below from the NDTV Good Times.

Calicut is a very pretty city in Kerala. Every year, the city normally has Tourists coming to visit the Vasco Da Gama's Vogage Port. They enjoy the Beach where Vasco Da Gama landed. Even in summer, the weather here is too cool. Don't worry, though – the traditional Keralite food and drink is both warming and very tasty. You can taste a tasty Banana Juice after a walk around the beach or can land in the Seaqueen Hotel for a Sea Food.

The descriptions of places and journeys in holiday programmes are intended to make us want to visit the place being described. Therefore, the presenter will often use adjectives and phrases which give a positive view, even of things which are not very pleasant. When learning adjectives, it is particularly important to notice if they have positive or negative connotations. Holiday programmes often give us the impression that the place which the presenter is visiting is not just good – it's wonderful!

2. **The language of interviews:**

`An interview takes place between a presenter of a programme – or interviewer – and someone who has been invited onto the programme to speak about a particular topic – the interviewee. The interviewee is often an expert on the topic or someone who has strong opinions, for example a politician talking about the government or a cinema critic talking about a new film. When listening to interviews, remember that the interviewer's job is to prompt or help the interviewee to talk. If the interviewer uses too many direct questions, the interviewee will soon stop speaking.

Therefore, the interviewer uses comments such as conclusions, summaries, and contrasting opinions to help the interviewee speak about the topic. The interviewer's task is to get the interviewee to say as much as possible about the topic, usually by asking many questions. Here is the extract from BBC World Service interviews.

Tom: When you go to cover these events, there are publicists out in force who want you to use showbiz language. On the other hand, I do try to damp it down because I do see show business reporting as a journalistic endeavour. We're not just there to have a good time and fawn all over these glittering stars.

Interviewer: But I guess amongst all the glitter and all the glamour it must be hard not to be swept along.

Tom: Yes, I think it really occurs at the most intense level with the big Hollywood blockbusters because they make them into what they call 'event movies'.

3.The language of sports commentaries:

A commentary is a description of an event as it is happening. The commentator describes for the listener all of the important points of the event so that she or he can visualise what is happening. The most common type of commentary is of sporting events. We have heard many commentaries since many years of Cricket, Football, Hockey, Tennis, Badminton, etc. Some of the famous Indian commentators according to me were Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Harsha Bhogale, Mandira Bedi, Ravi Shastri and many more. The commentaries are normally using the present simple and present continuous tenses. However, when the commentary is coming to a close, the commentator will often describe the game in present perfect tenses, showing that the event has taken place in the very recent past. While the action is happening, the commentators tend to use very short sentences. This helps to convey a feeling of excitement to the audience. Let us have a look on the following commentaries of Cricket taken from Ten Cricket 23rd January 2011, 11:15am.

These two are lightnings in the field of Cricket... Dhoni seems convinced...its terrific work done by Dhoni, his reach out for a catch...There's another example of a single, 201/6 South Africa.... off the edge , it calls for Four South Africa... they've run a single at the end of the over... That's it!... South Africa 265/7...

4. The language of news reports

A news report gives us details of a news story. The reporter needs to choose the words he or she uses very carefully to make the story clear and unbiased. The purpose of a news report may be in Television, Radio and Newspaper is usually to give the listener information in an interesting but objective way. To do this, they often use the passive voice and words which are synonyms. The news report given below comes from BBC Radio News.

Five men have been arrested in connection with the theft last month of three masterpieces from the National Museum in Stockholm. The Swedish nationals were detained in the Stockholm area just days after police received several photos of the paintings, along with a demand for hundreds of thousands of pounds. The works of art, including one by the Dutch master, Rembrandt, are estimated to be worth up to \$30m in total.

Using words with similar meanings in a news report keeps it interesting. As there is a lot of information in a very short time, it is important that the listener pays attention. If we hear the same word being repeated more than once or twice we might get bored and stop listening. By using near-synonyms the reporter keeps us interested in the whole story.

Using the passive voice in the above news report makes the report sound more formal. By putting the object of the verb at the beginning of the sentence, they take our attention away from the subject. So, although 'Five men were arrested' and 'Police arrested five men' have the same meaning, the reporter is focusing on the result of the action instead of the people doing the action. News reports often use the passive voice to avoid saying directly that someone has done something.

5.The language of Book reviews

A Book Review is the discussion of the literary work of the writer in the field literature. Although the vocabulary used in reviews depends very much on the type of art being discussed, you will find that there is a very clear way of organising information in the introduction to a review. If you can identify the way in which the information is organized in the introduction, this will help you understand the information in the main part of the review more easily. The introduction to a review about an artist and their work usually begins with an interesting fact about the artist. The presenter then usually goes on to give us two contrasting or different pieces of information about the artist or their work. This makes the listener think that there is an element of conflict or surprise in the artist or the work. It also gives a short summary of what the review will talk about in more detail. Finally, the introduction finishes with a comment about the artist for e.g. Alice Walker is 'one of America's most celebrated female writers' By describing the artists as very important people, the reviewer is telling us that we should listen to the programme because it will be very interesting. Let us read the following Review taken from the Internet on Alice Walker: A Battle of Words:

Alice Walker is a woman of many talents. Not only is she a poet, an essayist, short-story writer and award winning novelist, but she is also a social activist and in her own words 'a womanist' – a phrase adopted to describe a black feminist.As Off The Shelf concludes its reading of Walker's novel, By The Light Of My Father'sSmile, tribute is paid to one of America's most celebrated female writers.

6.The language of financial reports

A financial report is a news report about the economy and business. A financial reporter will often speak about how well or badly companies are performing, and the effect of business performance on a country's economy. There are many business related programmes on television such as ZEE Business, NDTV Profit, etc. Read the following extracts by financial reporters.

It's been another Black Monday on stock markets around the world and tonight the government is being asked to call off the sale of BP*. The price of BP shares has fallen so much that the companies which were underwriting the sale have gone to the government. In stock exchanges in Tokyo, Hong Kong, New York and London, billions have been wiped off the value of shares.

*British Petroleum

In financial reports, many of the words and phrases used to describe a company's success or failure are very dramatic. The rising and falling of prices is often described using verbs in this extract, we hear that money is wiped off the value of shares. Often, we hear that companies are completely wiped out. Using these phrasal verbs gives the impression of a violent loss of success, and makes the listener feel that the developments are very dramatic.

7.The Language of Internet/ Mobile:

The language of Internet has helped everyone under

the sky to improve at their own space. It is easily accessible for everyone to get clear their doubts. Internet itself has so many websites which helps us to get the right, accurate and unlimited data online. One can easily learn the speeches, compositions, pronunciations, presentations, interview skills, effective communication, etc with the help of Internet. The most useful sites is the Google.Com, Yahoo.Com, Rediff.Com, and the social networking sites are facebook, Orkut, Twitter, etc., which helps us to at least read and write in English language.

The language of Mobile Phones is usually in English. Most of the sentences and SMS are sent in English language. There is a facility of inbuilt Dictionary on the mobile phone, which helps to write correct English. There are Templates written in the mobile phones to help the masses to write or sent messages in English. Nowadays Internet facility is provided by telecom companies in the mobile phone itself which enable us to stay connected with our near and dear ones and also with the world at large.

8. The Language of the Movies/Daily Soaps/Advertisements:

The language of Movies are quite educative as children, youths and adults usually finds it entertaining and in fact they learn the correct language speaking skills by watching and hearing the movies sitting at home or in theatre. Movies like Titanic, The Lost World, Harry Potter, The Last Mimzy, The Merchant of Venice; The Last of the Mohicans, etc. gives lots of knowledge which enables the viewer to learn quickly.

The TV Soaps like The Guinness World Record, The Bournvita Quiz Contest, The Little Champs, Koun Banega Crorepati, etc., motivates the children, youth and adults to grasp knowledge and gain confidence in language, general knowledge, current affairs, etc.

The Advertisements also works magic in helping the viewers or readers to learn language and pronunciations just at a glance of 2 minutes advertisement. There are even advertisements of the new products like Cars, Bikes, etc on the Television i.e. 'Mad About Cars' on Zee Business on Sunday's 9:30 p.m. Hosted by the Associate Producer Nayeem Sayed. This show helps us to have our luxuries after proper examination by the experts from the show, who drives and then tells us its importance. Some of the Hindi/ regional language advertisements translated into English help the viewers and readers to translate and learn English in their own space, for e.g.

- Dairy Milk.
- New Fair & Lovely forever Glow
- Community Matrimony. Com
- Jeevan Saathi. Com.

Due to globalization English has regained prominent place in the lives of people. The Mass Media is responsible for promoting the benefits of learning English and motivating the masses to learn English language. Today because of Mass Media we are capable of turning the stumbling blocks (i.e. obstacles/ barriers in learning English language) into stepping stone for success in our lives.

NOTES

1. See Mahatma Gandhi, Young India (1919-22), p. 484.

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21. NDTV 24x7 News

22. NDTV Good Times.

23. BBC World Service interviews.

24. ZEE Business, NDTV Profit.

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