



## THE GENRE AND LINGUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRESS



**TAMAR KARAIA**

Master in European Languages and Translation

Sokhumi State University

Mail: tamrikoqaraia@yahoo.com

Contact number: +86 182 2665 2409

### ABSTRACT

*To study media language nowadays is the domain of many linguists and language researchers. Through numerous works have been dedicated to this subject, there are still some issues that need to be emphasized more deeply. In this paper, we underlined the most significant characteristics of the media language, especially of the written text. Our interest mainly focuses on the conditions of language in its state of flux.*

*As our readers see below, any form of written and spoken media language has a fascinating insight into human comprehension and its behaviour, as it shapes the cultural, political and social life of society. Therefore, studying the various forms and styles of journalistic language goes into full-length semantic depths. Thus the scientific approach to conversational or text communication is far more different than of the academic essays.*

*The purpose of this paper is to present a brief and clear classification of journalistic language, its impact upon the reader or listener. The importance and the role of media audience are also underlined, as one of the key niches as the way of gaining common understanding. Considering its manifestly pivotal role in today's world, news language became the sphere of our interest and we hope that this article would make a modest contribution to the media research.*

**Keywords:** media, news language, media text, press, journalism, reader, viewer.

### INTRODUCTION

The language the press and the media use is an integral part of social and everyday life. It can be a window into what society views as necessary and worthy. The forms and structures the author forms in his essay should be tailored to his audience because it will decide what is considerable and what is not. As the language is an ever-evolving organ, we can say that it accomplishes multiple tasks and it is the vital means of communication in the modern world.

Interestingly, there is a compelling factor in how news language is produced with the hands of the author and received with the eye of the reader. These two-component always influences the form and structure language takes in the written or spoken context. The purpose of the speaker or writer, also what and how is being said or written shapes the changing characters of

media language. Thus, the various language features, emerge from the refreshing and renewing ways of communication are used for different purposes in different circumstances (Chafe, 1987:6).

It must be noticed that written language, unlike to spoken language, tends to have a more varied vocabulary and it is not spontaneous, so the writer has more time to think and put the words and sentences in the sequence appropriate to what he wants to say. Thus, they find the most suitable phrases, words, and vocabulary units to express their opinion and convey their thoughts (*idem*).

The written form of media language - the article, the essay - and other kinds of textual forms reveals the cultural and social interests and identifies its significance in the terms of the most important issues to which it is relatively connected. It should be noted that all type



of media resources - television, radio, newspapers, and magazines broadcasting the real events and conditions around us, therefore in recent decades more and more readers or listeners participate both passively and actively in the news events. The public participation in this process makes media and the language it uses fascinating. Because the media, particularly television is considered as the 'window on the world', the public interest and involvement in it are not surprising. And it would not be an exaggeration if we say that the various media forms mediate between us and the 'real world' (Rayner, Wall, Kruger: 2004:60)

Thus our attention to this issue is due to the fact of the importance of mass media and its role in our society. How it affects the world around us and shapes human worldview. The power of media language has become more noticeable recently and the evolution of modern media emerging with new possibilities and purposes. The logical flow of events, that taking place in our everyday reality reflects on the clear glass of mass media with all its clarity and has logical connections between the events and the viewers.

**LANGUAGE OF JOURNALISM - FASCINATING INSIGHT OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING**

As it is widely known, media text consists of codes and signs. R. Jakobson, (1962) an American linguist and literary theorist notes in his work, media- text is made up of codes and signs. He separates six constituent factors of speech acts and verbal communication. They are: the addressee, the addresser, context- transmit information (message), contact, and a code. Contract -means the psychological and physical connection between the addressee and the addresser, that allows them to establish successful communication. According to Jakobson, above mentioned six factors define the language function, however, there is not any verbal act that performs just one function. Discussing the different functions of the language, Jacobson considers six following functions of language: Emotive(expressive), Referential, Poetic, Phatic, Metalingual, and Conative. In this scheme, Jacobson underlines the connections between the six aspects of the speech acts and their functions (Jakobson, 1962).

1. Referential – The message in a context that the addressee can seize;
2. Emotive/Expressive – Aim is the direct expression of the speaker’s attitude about the message;
3. Conative – Part/kind of message not liable to a

truth test and/or that is performative;

4. Phatic – Parts of message used to establish, prolong, discontinue communication; to attract/confirm the attention of addresser;
5. Metalingual – Elements that make sure addresser and addressee understand each other;
6. Poetic – focuses on message for its own sake and is the operative functions in poetry as well as slogans.

There is no doubt that the rapid growth of the modern world and the process of globalization have made the society largely dependent on the media and therefore it has a significant function. In the age of information more or less similar journalistic standards established all around the world, though the media is not monotonous and this is due to the fact that the press and the media generally have various social conditions and different cultural backgrounds.

It is doubtless that the language of the press has a huge impact on human communication. A Personal view of the journalists, his individualism and knowledge are expressed through his language facilities. Therefore, selecting specific language units, such as written or oral discourse is always conditioned by the pragmatic purpose of an addresser. Hence numerous stylistic approaches and their substitute units such as idiom, slang, and comparison are often used in the language. Nevertheless, as celebrated English essayist and novelist George Orwell mentions frequent and inappropriate usage of these language causes ambiguity both in writing and in speech (Orwell 1964.).

To understand various semantic and stylistic means that are expressed in newspaper articles and at the same time, it is of key importance to analyse media text to consider background knowledge. Through this kind of consideration allows us to perceive and explain the meaning of any news accurately. As Dutch linguist and scientist T. Dijk mentions, both the author and the reader need a great deal of knowledge to create and understand even the simplest text or information. Through this knowledge, the human being becomes aware of the cognition of the world, perceives the news and establishes associations (Dijk 2004:).

Professor of Language and Communication A. Bell considers, that scientists’ interest in media language has several factors:

1. Accessibility of media as a source of data for some language feature we want to learn;
2. Interest in the way the media uses some language feature also found in ordinary speech;



3. Interest in media's role in affecting language in wider society;

4. Interest in what media language reveals as a mirror of the wider society and culture;

5. Interest in how media language affects attitudes and opinions in society through the way it presents people and issues;

6. Availability, media language is easier to collect than conversation. It is 'there' in large quantities;

7. There is no such thing as famous since media language is already intended for mass public consumption (Bell, 1999).

When studying media language, we often find the term 'text'. It implies any kind of journalistic product such as television story, radio program, photographs or article. Media text, namely article is made up of signs and codes. There is a diversity of opinion about this subject among the researchers. For example, linguists Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2004) consider that sign is made up of the set of codes. They distinguish three types of mark: conditional i.e. symbolic, iconic and indexical. The sign is symbolic when there is not an obvious connection between the sign and the object (Saynell, Wall, Kruger 2004). Such kind of sign-in most cases is conditional (Peirce). There is not a direct and internal connection between the signifier and the signified. We can assume that the article consists of the conditional signs because the word itself is a conditional sign (Rayner, Wall and Kruger 2004).

The best example of the iconic sign is a photograph, where there is a physical similarity between the iconic sign and the object. And the sign is indexical when there is a direct connection signifier and signified object. For example, smoke - is an index sign of (signifies) fire, tears - of a melancholy or a joy. Index signs correspond to graphical data images in a newspaper (Peirce, 1904).

As an American writer, editor and teacher R.P Clark underline, the American press is influenced by spoken language, therefore the basic principles of writing are simplicity and clarity of expression. In his work 'The American Conversation and the Language of Journalism', Clark studies the influence of an American language on the language of journalism and offers the following characters of an American language:

- The language of journalism is active;
- The language of journalism is somewhat busy;
- The language of journalism is democratic; We can also call it American. It implies the proximity of the words and phrases related to the democratic principles

and assesses American values;

- Though the language of journalism is different from the spoken language, at the same time compared to other prose forms, it stands closer to the speech;

- The language of journalism is simple;
- The most valuable character of the language of journalism is its clarity and the main result is its easy perception (Clark, 1994).

The newspaper is characterized by the following genres: the news, the essay, the letter from the editorial board and a comment/column. The news can be classified as hard and soft news, breaking or concealed the news. The main features of the news are - content, unexpectedness, reference to people and elite nations and its negativity. The classification of an essay is relatively more diverse (Personal biography, current stories, popular directions, background article, historical feature, adventure feature, explanatory feature, features about hobbies and different activities, medical and business feature and so on). As it is mentioned above, various kind of classification can be combined into several major groups. The classification of essays is the following: Personality Features and Profile, Historical Feature, Adventure Feature, Explanatory Feature, In-depth story, how to do it Feature, Unusual Occupation or Hobby Feature. Here we can also separate Daily News and Trends - where we can combine medical and business features. The individual opinion of the author is mainly expressed in the following two genres - the letter from the editorial board and a comment/column (Clark, 1994).

The English language press, especially the American press has had a major influence on modern journalistic standards. In his well-known article 'Politics and The English Language', famous British novelist, essayist, and journalist George Orwell points out, in the English language, especially in the sphere of politics, the tendency of using complex phrases, faded metaphors, various stylistic modes and their substitutes are notable (Orwell, 1968).

Orwell underlines the fact that the long and vague phrases are used in relation to politics and the main reason for it is insincerity. He separates and focuses on the following phrases, such as: **render inoperative; militate against; make contact with; to be subject to; give rise to; give grounds for; have the effect of; to play a leading part (role) in; make it-self felt; take effect; exhibit the tendency to; serve the purpose of; lay the foundations.** These phrases



are often used at the expense of dropping out the simple verbs such as *break, stop, spoil, mend, kill etc.* The author also talks about the tendency of frequent usage of faded metaphors and altered phrase expressions (Orwell 1968).

It must be mentioned that the language of modern journalism aspires to simplicity, however in the British press (especially in the political articles), the elements of using complicating and obscure phrases are still noticeable, about which Orwell spoke more than fifty years ago. In the British press, we can still find the phrases that can be easily replaced with 'simpler' synonyms and equivalents. They are: *exercise restraint; be under any doubt; marked a hardening tone; left no room for ambiguity; might yet be sufficient room for manoeuvre; express grave concerns; appear to escalate; Downing Street believes the admission were made under duress...* Orwell rightly believes that the use of long and vague phrases is due to disguise the truth, which is typical for the political sphere (Orwell 1968).

It should also be noted that in the American articles the main emphasis is placed on the expressive and widespread verbs e.g. *fired, said, questioned*, which in general speeds up the pace of reading. The difficult phrases that are used in British articles (of-phrase, gerunds, present participle) create the opposite effect: *to break one of the final taboos; are expected sitting down together to try to agree with terms on.*

We often heard the phrases '**Language is a living organism**'; '**Language changes constantly**' and it is true. There are two categories of people, who really are eager to make radical changes in the language and the people, who distort the language for the reason they do not know it. In any case, the language is a part of history, it is developing constantly and the language reflects and expresses the changes in history in the most accurate way (Orwell, 1968).

**THE STRUCTURE AND CRITERIA OF DIFFERENTIATION OF NEWS**

News is the most striking example of mass information. Any kind of mass media: television, radio, press, focuses on news coverage. In the news story, the individual opinion of the journalist is not expressed and as a rule, the author must meet a certain format when creating such an article. The news is selected according to different criteria. We consider the follow-

ing criteria as the characteristic attribute of news, one of the most significant criteria is - **Timeliness**. This means to provide information on time, and an event is more newsworthy the sooner it is reported. The second important criteria is - **Current**. The following criterias are - **Impact, Influence** on the reader. The fourth is - **Prominence and Uniqueness**, how well known and popular is the country, person or event, the article is dedicated to. The fifth criterion is - **Negativity** - the press and especially television focus mainly on the negative news. Thirty-ninth Vice-President of the United States, Spiro T. Agnew called the journalists: 'Narrating nabobs of negativism'. President Clinton's Press Secretary J. Lockhart said that: according to the philosophy of reporters '**Good news is not news any more**', which becomes the new variation of the hitherto establish phrase - '**no news is good news**'. One of the clear signs of revealing negativity is - **Conflict**. And the last criteria, we want to mention here is - **Relevancy, Compliance**, which means the **proximity** to the reader (Geographical or Cultural). This means that the events are more newsworthy the closer they are to the community reading about them. It can be explained by the simple fact that people are more interested in the news, which influences their social, cultural and geographical environment and condition (Soley,1992).

As it is mentioned before, we can classify news as Serious, hard news and soft news. Hard news often describes the events that are negative, for example, murder, accident, fire disaster, elections, clash results and so on. The following phrase can be considered as an example of hard news:

*'At least 27 people, including a senior British diplomat, were killed yesterday and hundreds injured, when two suspected al-Qaeda suicide bombers attacked the British consulate and the headquarters of HSBC bank in Istanbul'* (The Daily Telegraph, November,21<sup>st</sup>, 2003).

The soft news can often be identified with the essay. Here is an example:

*'One would have thought of a former career in public relations and a familiarity with the machinations of the Press might have helped her to easily avoid a blooper.*

*But Sarah Brown, despite her reputation as an experienced and professional PR woman, broke her own publisher's embargo yesterday by announcing she had agreed a deal to write her memories'* (The Independent, June 4<sup>th</sup>,2010).



### THE GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION OF NEWSPAPER COMMUNICATION

The language of journalism with all its agility and complexity is evidently exhibited in magazines and newspapers. The newspaper is one of the sources of information among various types of news supplies. It the specific types of communication, and here the information is mostly transmitted through the printed words – textual materials (Prokhorov,2002).

The newspaper covers both verbal, as well as visual kind of communication; It represents very impressive and original forms of communication, where communicators (addressee and addressor) do not have direct communication, and therefore it is a distant type of, e.g. the transmitter of the information(addressor) is active, and the recipient (addressee) – passive. But in the newspaper, as well as in the different sources of information (radio, television), this connection is somehow hidden, which is due of the fact, that in the newspaper the addressee's sociolinguistic factors (age, gender, profession, status, nationality, and views) are taken into account (Prokhorov, 2002).

The specifics of the newspaper language are determined by the functions that are performed in the newspaper during the process of communication. Y. Prokhorov in his work 'Introduction to the Theory of Journalism' formulates six functions of newspaper (Prokhorov, 2002):

1. Communicative, which is the main and the general function of journalism;
2. Ideological - socially-oriented function, when narrating a story, the author tries to influence the consciousness and values of the masses;
3. Directly – organizing, the function of the regulator. It involves both the obligations and responsibilities of the journalist as well as providing the reader with good quality information;
4. Cultural – formative, this is the function, which promotes the labelling of the culture of the members of society and their behavioural etiquette;
5. Advertising – informative, the mentioned function is used to meet the utilitarian needs;
6. Entertainment, the function connected with ways of enjoying, relief from tension; (idem).

G. Kvaratskhelia in his book 'Functional Stylistics of Georgian Language' pays attention to three functions of newspaper communication: (Kvaratskhelia, 1990)

- A) Informational;
- B) Agitation-Propaganda;

C) Of Impact, i.e. Expressive.

It must be underlined that some of the functions are of the intermediate type. These can be advertising and advertising-informative functions, for they can be combined into informative and influential functions at the same time (Kvaratskhelia,1990).

*Informative*, i.e. the fundamental functions the newspaper must meet are practicableness and conciseness. In other terms, the news must be delivered to the addressee quickly, in a short period and with the condensed manner. Here, we add that practicability – conciseness is valuable for informational – newspaper genre.

*Influential* function plays a crucial role in newspaper communication. With this function, it is possible to affect the reader's consciousness and control his behaviour. That can be achieved by using both implicit and explicit meaning of language. The Influential function also includes advertising which is so prevalent for the newspaper (idem).

One of the most important functions in the newspaper is an entertainment function. It is a way to attract readers easily. In the newspaper communication, the types of entertainment are divided into two groups:

1. Cognitive-informing, where we can combine: crossword, horoscope, sports, philological text, announcements of television programs;
2. For entertainment: anecdote, fun stories.

Newspaper language, which is characterized by universal similarity of features, is distinguished also by the individuality. We can compare the differentiation of newspaper language according to Brown and Yule (1985). There are several conceptual features of newspaper language:

1. Settings - Time and Space, it indicates the place of action in time and space;
2. Participants of communication;
3. Addressor – journalist or correspondent, who encodes the news story;
4. Addressee – the reader, who decodes the information;
5. Purpose – the purpose of communicators;
6. Topic – what is the communication about;
7. Chanel – how the interconnection of communicators be achieved;
8. Code – the language, or language subtype. In this case newspaper language, which is used by the communicators during the communication;
9. Message Form – characteristics of the genre;



10. Key tone – involves evaluation of the model of expressions (Brown and Yule,1985).

In most of the newspapers, the official and neutral features of the language are commonly used. When transmitting information, they use a language that is acceptable to all layers of society in an informal setting. Therefore, the reader can understand the text without focusing on and thinking about the grammar and semiotic sequence of the words and sentences. There is an indirect relationship between the author, his reader and the text, the article is the connecting chain of the two sides. This process makes a triangle of discourse which unites the author, his work and the audience. The reader - the audience is not simply a customer of a newspaper or a magazine, but also an active participant in all the process. The text which is written by the author for a particular purpose has a set of intended meaning, that later are interpreted by the reader. In some cases, the intended meaning and the interpreted meanings differ if there is not a common way of understanding between the sender and the receiver. In other terms, the text message contains encoded meanings, which the narrate have to decode while reading it. Hence, the nature of reading, the relation of an active text and a passive ‘receiver’ and the process of decoding is a quite complex and sophisticated process that is produced from the cultural experience and identity of the reader (Rayner, Wall, Kruger, 2003).

**CONCLUSION**

As a consequence, the growing dominance of media shows that news language is increasingly integrated

into spoken language. Simultaneously, the language of journalism is active and simple, and its influence over everyday speech became more prevalent. Therefore, the rising interest of society in a different kind of news and the easy access means that they govern and shape all forms of social relationships. It also affects our sense of reality, our conscious and the way we define ourselves and the world around us.

The living, consonantly changing organism of language adapts to its varying environments and is always customized to the interest and demands of the reader/viewer. By using specific phraseology and language features the writer/speaker interact with their audience and talk frequently about definite time and space, where they take the audience’s interest into account. Thus media language develops rapidly in the environment where the presence of the audience plays a crucial role. The trends in the development of language are tailored to the listener/viewer. There is no doubt that involvement with the audience is obviously an important aspect of media communication.

In the twenty-one century, in the era of globalization and modernization, the developing capacity of media language is obviously limitless. It is necessary to notice that the news language became generally more innovative and aims to cut a window on the world to reflect events occurring around us all over the world. Due to modern technology, this effort is easily achieved and the reader/listener will decide what kind of information they want to get and thus increase their consciousness about the world.

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## პრესის ჟანრი და ენობრივი მახასიათებლები

თამარ ქარაია

ევროპული ენებისა და თარგმანის მაგისტრი  
სოხუმის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

### ანოტაცია

მედიის ენის შესწავლა მრავალი ლინგვისტისა და ენის მკვლევართა ინტერესის მთავარ საგანს წარმოადგენს. მიუხედავად იმისა რომ ამ თემაზე მრავალი ნაშრომი არსებობს, დღემდე რჩება რამდენიმე საკითხი, რომელსაც უფრო სიღრმისეული კვლევა სჭირდება. ამ ნაშრომში ჩვენ ხაზგასმით აღვნიშნეთ მედია ენის ყველაზე მნიშვნელოვანი მახასიათებლები, განსაკუთრებით წერილობითი ტექსტის. ჩვენი ინტერესი განსაკუთრებით შეეხო იმ პირობებს, რომლის გამოც ენა მუდმივ ცვლილებას განიცდის.

მოცემულ სტატიაში მკითხველი დაინახავს, რომ მედიის ენა, იქნება ეს წერილობითი თუ ზეპირი, გვიქმნის საინტერესო წარმოდგენას ადამიანთა ცნობიერებასა და მის ქცევებზე, რადგანაც იგი აყალიბებს საზოგადოების კულტურულ, პოლიტიკურ და სოციალურ ცხოვრებას. ამრიგად, ჟურნალისტური ენის სხვადასხვა ფორმების შესწავლა უფრო ფართო სემანტიკურ სიღრმეებში აღწევს. ამიტომაც, სასაუბრო ან ტექსტური კომუნიკაციის მიმართ მეცნიერული მიდგომა ბევრად განსხვავდება აკადემიური ესეების კვლევისაგან.

ამ ნაშრომის მიზანია ჟურნალისტური ენის მოკლე და მკაფიო კლასიფიკაციის წარმოდგენა, მისი გავლენა მკითხველსა თუ მსმენელზე. სტატიაში ჩვენ ასევე ვისაუბრებთ მედია აუდიტორიის მნიშვნელობასა და როლზე, როგორც საერთო გაგების ერთ-ერთ მთავარ ნიშანზე. დღევანდელ მსოფლიოში მისი აშკარად მნიშვნელოვანი როლის გათვალისწინებით, ახალი ამბების ენა ჩვენი ინტერესის სფერო გახდა და ვიმედოვნებთ, რომ ზემოაღნიშნული სტატია მოკრძალებულ წვლილს შეიტანს მედიის კვლევაში.

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** მედია, ახალი ამბების ენა, მედია ტექსტი, პრესა, ჟურნალისტიკა, მკითხველი, მაყურებელი.