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**TEACHING MEDIA LANGUAGE IN THE RECENT SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGES**


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**KAKASAHEB D DHAYGUDE**

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**Abstract:** The 21<sup>st</sup> century is an era of Information Technology. Computer has become an important tool to use information technology. Computer and Information technology have brought a sea change in the human life in the present context. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century development of media has become widely used, when broadcasting as well as the press had become important in communities. It was then the necessary general word: mass media, media people, media agencies, media studies, media language followed. The technical sense of *medium* has in practice been compatible with a social sense of *media* in which the practices and institutions are seen as agencies for quite other than their primary purposes.

The objective of this paper is to explore and analyze the multiple concepts of the term 'media' and 'media language' in the modern context and the recent socio-cultural changes in the present scenario. The major interest has emerged in the language of the media used with various socio-cultural changes in the modern techno-socio-cultural milieu. Media has become a part and parcel of our modern life-style in each and every field. This is a fact-finding attempt to motivate language learners to highlight the extensive stylistic changes in the language over the past centuries before the use of media and also to take into consideration the various socio-cultural changes due to the use of the media in our life.

**Keywords:** Communication, Culture, Language, Media.

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**Introduction:** In one sense, *media* is a classic example of the kind of semantic change that happens when objects change like *pen*: meanings changing in response to changing social needs. Yet *media* of necessity is more complex than a word like *pen*. There are three main uses of the word 'media': (1) New media, (2) Mass media and (3) Broadcast media. The new media refers to the *ethernet media, Me media, moving image media, screen media, online news media* and *web-based media*.

1] New media has/have given the root word 'medium' – a new lease of life. In that we talk of the medium of Netspeak, or of text-messaging or of tape or disk, known as *format*.

2] The second sense is the main means of mass communication, collectively newspapers, radio, television and advertising.

3] Thirdly, currently 'media' refers to news media in popular parlance, including internet, popular magazines, terrestrial and satellite TV, i. e. broadcast media are better served by media. The broadcast media including internet are characterized by *immediacy* from the same Latin root.

There are different meanings of the term 'media'. *The Dictionary of Media Studies* defines 'media' as "the various means of mass communication considered as a whole, including radio, television, magazines together with the people involved in their production." [2006: 143] Media technologies are unevenly distributed across the globe, as well as both different social group occupying the same place. Ruth Finnegan locates our modern idea of 'media' in the larger context of humans' use of a wide range of signs and artefacts as means of communication.[2002: 40-

43] 'The media', a much-used phrase nowadays, often means 'the mass media' usually press, radio and television but also sometimes the cinema, recordings of popular music and some computer-mediated forms. In wider historical sweeps, broad distinctions have been drawn between writing, print and electrical media, with the recent addition of electronic computer-based media. Sometimes, 'the oral medium' of speech starts off the series. Other writers used 'media' to refer to concrete forms like coins, maps or graffiti.

In the modern context of the Information and Communication Technology, there is much usage of mass media, mass-production, mass-market, mass-culture, mass leisure. The *Magisterial International Encyclopedia of Communications* lists under 'media' nearly thirty forms of varying levels of generality, including sculpture, photographs, motion pictures, murals, radio, television, books, maps, stamps, portraits, writing and telegraphy etc. Raymond Williams in his book *Culture and Society* (1983) criticizes the shallowness of modern mass-culture and entertainment. The media also gave rise to compounds reflecting the culture stuff such *media blitz, media circus, media coverage, media darling, media event, media exposure, media hype, media industry, media interview, media interest, media junkie, media markets, media personality, media-friendly, media-gate, mediagenic, media-saturated, media-savvy, media-shy, media-speak, media-wise* and so on.

Written registers in English have undergone extensive stylistic change over the past four centuries. As Douglas Biber and E. Finegan writes: "Written

prose registers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were already quite different from conversational registers, and those registers evolved to become even more distinct from speech over the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. . .” [1989: 510-514] Over the course of time in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, popular written registers like letters, fiction, essays have reversed their direction of change and evolved to become more similar to spoken registers. Samuel Johnson and Benjamin Franklin’s writing elaborated ornamental to persuade readers and the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the middle-class literacy in the writings of Daniel Defoe and Richardson. This literacy in English gained ground in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and reinforced by mass-schooling. The linguistic style of newspaper discourse has also undergone dramatic long-term change. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the newspaper prose was similar to academic prose. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the oral styles began to influence newspaper prose and it was followed by more marked change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Over the past few decades, these changes towards the oral styles in newspaper language have accelerated. News has been developing more popular oral styles. It has also been innovative in developing literate styles.

John B Thompson describes three types of interaction which are made possible by different forms of communication. [1995: 83-87] There are (1) face-to-face interaction, (2) mediated interaction and (3) mediated quasi-interaction. The face-to-face interaction takes place in a context of co-presence. The participants can use deictic expressions. It is also dialogical in character. The mediated interaction means the forms of interaction such as letter-writing, telephone conversations, technical medium such as paper, electrical wires, electromagnetic waves. This interaction is stretched across space and time. The third form of interaction – mediated quasi-interaction – refers to the kinds of social relations established by the media of mass communication. It is also stretched across space and time. It is monological in character and involves the production of symbolic forms for an indefinite range of potential recipients. It creates a certain kind of social situation in which individuals are linked together in a process of communication and symbolic exchange.

The growing importance of mediated interaction and mediated quasi-interaction and the gradual development of new forms of reception and appropriation do mean that social life in the modern world is increasingly made-up of forms of interaction which are not face-to-face in character. With the rise of mediated interaction and quasi-interaction, the interaction-mix of social life has changed. The interaction mix means an overall social make-up or ecology of how people interact for different purposes

and in different settings, including by using media at a distance. The interaction-mix has changed between different periods. John B Thompson relates the different kinds of interaction to changing ideas of what he calls public ‘visibility’. By ‘visibility’, he means how much we are given to see or know about politicians, celebrities and other public figures. Visibility is an important aspect of social relations, including how power and influence work.

At present, the news interview is a familiar and readily recognizable genre of the broadcast talk. The news interview reflects and contributes to the current state of journalism, politics and their co-evolution over time. While highlighting the language of the advertising, most critics would now question the idea that literature can be defined as a special type of language. The language of advertising has catchy-sounds (alliteration, assonance, rhyme, tunes and intonation), catchy-print (frequency of letters, unpredictable spelling, between language, names and shapes, homophones etc). The social conditions constrain media-discourse and media-texts and their social effects – in terms of systems of knowledge and beliefs, social relations of power and the positioning of people as social subjects. The changes in society and culture frame the sort of changes in the media order of discourse. Norman Fairclough provides a ‘metalanguage’ for talking about the language and intertextuality of texts something which is essential for a critical literacy of media language. [1995b: 201-205] There is a major transformation brought about by the capability of 20<sup>th</sup> century media to broadcast and reproductive speech. Welter Org, a modern linguist, describes a major social contrast between ‘non-media’ or ‘primary oral speech’ and ‘secondary oral media’ that permit recorded and broadcast sound. [2002: 133-134]

In the recent times, media language is a sub-set of uses of language in all the many different conversational and public settings in which we encounter language in use. Media language also indicates language transmitted by means of specific channels: spoken/written, combined with images amplified, broadcast, recorded, streamed online etc. At the first glance, language in media is a matter of particular collected data. There are specific words, idioms, sentence structures and styles of language use, written or spoken, to be appreciated, discussed and set in context. We can download discourse from the internet, print off incoming emails, record people talking on TV programmes. Thus media language is a specialized kind of sign system – a structure of words, images, music and sound effects governed by rules or conventions. This kind of perception leads us to speak of a ‘language of television’, a ‘language of film’, or to refer to ‘music as a language’. The secondary

orality or the renewed dominance of speech represented a fundamental shift, likely to shape the future of media language forever. That was before the internet. The internet revolution has also moved 'media language' towards multimodal kinds of textual organization. In multimodal discourse, images, written text, music and sound combine and function together. But these changes are as yet incomplete. Contemporary conventions and styles of media language, which may seem fixed and even natural now, are likely to alter in future.

David Graddol [1994: 136-142] emphasizes the role played in creating a sense of truth or reality by the organization of visual material as a kind of rhetoric. The linguistic categories can be applied with suitable modification to visual discourse. TV offers a 'window on the world'. The transparency and perceived factuality of the TV genres is a testament to the extent to which its conventions of representation have become naturalized. Understanding the semiotics of factuality is perhaps one of the most important *literacy skills* required by readers and viewers in the modern industrial world. J. Ellis rightly points out: "Sound tends to anchor meaning on TV, where the image tends to anchor it with the cinema." [1982: 129] On the other hand, some researchers have pointed to the cultural importance of the visual image in establishing truth, 'Seeing is believing': "Seeing has, in our culture, become synonymous with understanding. We 'look' at a problem. We 'see' the point. We adopt a 'viewpoint'. We 'focus' on an issue. We 'see things in perspective'. The world 'as we see it' (rather than 'as we know it', and certainly not 'as we hear it', or 'as we feel it') has become the measure for what is 'real' and 'true'." [Kress and Van Leeuwen. 1990: 52]

With telephone, radio, television and various kinds of second type, the electronic technology has brought us into the age of 'secondary orality'. This new orality has striking resemblances to the old in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment and even its use of formulas. The secondary orality is both remarkably like and remarkably unlike primary orality. Like primary orality, secondary orality has generated a strong group sense. But secondary orality generates a sense for groups larger than those of primary oral culture, i. e. McLuhan's 'global village'. While focusing on the language of Internet, there are

various situations – email, synchronous and asynchronous chatgroups, virtual worlds, the World Wide Web, blogging and instant messaging in which there are various signs of the emergence of a distinctive variety of language. The Net is only a part of the world of computer-mediated language. Radio brought a new kind of language which yielded several sub-varieties like commentary, news, weather. Then television added a further dimension which evolved sub-varieties. It is difficult to say how many computer-mediated varieties of language will eventually emerge. Currently, the phenomenon of Netspeak is going to 'change the way we think' about language in a fundamental way, because it is a linguistic singularity – a genuine new medium. For Netspeak is something completely new. It is neither 'spoken writing' nor 'written speech'. It is something different from both writing and speech, as traditionally understood. It is, in short, a fourth medium. We can add a further dimension to comparative enquiry: 'spoken language vs. written language vs. sign language vs. computer-mediated language'. Netspeak is a development of millennial significance.

**Conclusion:** Media communication events are structured differently from person-to-person conversation. As a result, they present greater difficulty when misunderstanding, disagreement over meaning, or a sense of being offended arises. TV news is both a knowledge system and a genre. The visual component of TV news provides crucial resources. The history of communication media is not only a history of successive technologies and institutions. It is also one of changing social relations governing interaction between people. Developing an ability to talk about meaning is an important aspect of engaging actively with a changing media environment. Such skill is a part of 'media literacy'. The various established media elements are already becoming increasingly integrated, in a frame of reference neatly captured by the phrase 'streaming media'. This would appear that the aim is to make anything speedily available with anything - Web with sound and video, personal digital assistants with Web access, TV with Internet access, Internet with TV access, Radio programmes with pictures and so on. The contemporary language is facing many challenges which are the results of rapid expansion of the Internet.

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Kakasaheb D Dhaygude/Department Of English/  
Mahatma Basweshwar College/ Latur./ Maharashtra/  
/ kakasaheb.dhaygude@gmail.com/Mobile No. 9405606046