

Unit Five

Studies in Language of Newspaper

Introduction to News

- Very simple definition of news is: what is new is news. News is a report of a current event or information in media. The news items in media are news stories. North+East+West+South= NEWS.
- News is main form in which current information about events is carried by media of all kinds. – McQuail (2005)

- News is an account of recent event or opinion which is important or interesting. Shrivastava (1991)
- News is report of recent or current event or information published in a newspaper or any periodicals. Pant & Kumar ((1995)
- Key terms used in the above definitions: information, report, recent, current, event, media

Types of news

- **Hard and soft news:** Hard news happens by itself; fire, accident, plane crash and natural disaster. Soft news includes people places and issues or human interest stories; weddings of famous people, sports, entertainments.

- **Breaking news and follow up news:** Breaking news breaks the story or brings new information in public. Follow up stories are published or broadcast in order to report more of a story which has already been reported.

- **Good news and bad news:** Good news is about positive aspects of human life; development, service, discovery, invention etc. Bad news is about events with negative impact; death, tragedy, disaster.

- **Straight news and analytical news:** Straight news gives descriptions of factual events of programmes. Analytical news involves interpretation, analysis and investigation. It analyses cause and effect of the events.

- **Natural and artificial news:** Unexpected events like accidents and natural calamities become natural news. Planned events and programmes like sports and visits become artificial news.

Characteristics/values of News or Newsworthiness

- **Timeliness:** latest, immediate, new, and timely
- **Proximity:** physically or geographically close, attached
- **Prominence:** about people who hold positions or authority
- **Impact:** events with high impact on public life

- **Novelty:** strange or unusual events
- **Conflict:** debates, arguments, wars
- **Currency:** matters of common concern for the public

Tools and Conventions used to write News stories

Writers for the mass media have two tasks: gathering information and putting that information into an acceptable form. News writers should be able to put information into an appropriate form for the print media. Mastering news story and feature story is the foundation of a news writer.

- The idea of central theme is important for news story writing. Faced with a mass of information, facts, ideas quotations, the news writer can use the central idea to help sort out what should be included in the story and how the various pieces of information should be presented to the reader. The central idea is usually expressed early in the story, normally in the first paragraph, called the lead. The lead sets out the tone and direction for the story.

Journalistic writing is formal structured and demanding. Accurate information in the accurate context is the main goal of writing. All media writers should present information accurately, precisely, clearly and efficiently.

The information the writer has, the amount of time to write the story, the space available to print story are the major factors determining how the story is developed. Writers must be aware of the tools and conventions of writing for the media.

According to Stovall (2008), the following are some of the tools and conventions for writing news stories.

1. Transitions: Transitions are a way of tying the information together and tipping the reader of as to what may come next. Transitions establish the relationship between pieces of information and the central theme. The following transitions are used.

- a. **Connectors:** use of conjunctions –and, but, however, therefore etc.
- b. **Hooks:** Repetitions of some words and phrases throughout the text give the reader the sense of unity.
- c. **Pronouns:** use of pronouns like he, she, it, they to avoid repetitions of names of people and things.
- d. **Associations:** Use of different words to refer to same ideas

e. **Chronology:** Use of words and phrases that show the sequence of event in terms of time of occurrence.

f. **Enumeration:** First, second, third or number one, number two.....

2. Attribution: Attribution means telling readers where the information in the story comes from. It is giving credit to sources for their information. Readers believe the information published is true. It also reflects professionalism.

Examples:

- The mayor said the city is facing a budget crisis.
- According to the police report, the thief had a pistol.

Verbs: say, explain, relate, point out, declare, reveal, disclose, exclaim, assert, affirm, deny etc.

3. Short Sentences, short paragraphs: The news writer tries to get information to the reader as quickly as possible. The information needs to be accommodated in a limited space in a newspaper.

4. **Third Person:** The writer does not intrude into a story. Example:

- The principal said the enrollment at our school has gone down. Wrong
- The principal said the enrollment at City School has gone down. Right

News stories are not addressed directly to the reader using second person pronoun 'you'. So news reports are written in the third person.

5. An attitude for accuracy: Journalists try to make sure that the information is correct. A journalist should never be satisfied with information about which he or she has doubt. The attitude or the mindset of the journalist should be guided by the sense of clarity and accuracy in terms of fact and figures.

The News Culture

The Practice of news production has developed a culture of its own. Journalism is traditionally practiced through organizations. These organizations have their modes of operations and cultural expectations. They are also part of larger culture.

Some of cultural norms of news production are as follows:

1. **Objectivity:** News is factual report of an event. The reporter cannot angle, slant or shade the news.
2. **Fairness:** Reporters maintain the balance in the coverage of events. They respect reputation and character of individuals and institutions.

3. **Clarity:** A reporter should have clarity in mind and expression. There should be no confusion and no ambiguity. Brevity and simplicity are the soul of journalism.

4. **Accuracy:** There should be check and re-check until perfect accuracy is achieved.

5. Attention to details: Attention must be paid to minute details like spelling, figures and wording.

6. Mix of individual and corporate effort: Reporters must maintain balance of their personal beliefs, their profession and the organization.

7. **Deadlines:** In reporters' professional life, there is always lack of time and space. They need to complete their job within a given time limit. They are always in a hurry.

8. **Skepticism:** They should not take things for granted. They should always be questioning. They should always have a sense of doubt.

9. Sense of greater good: Their expectations are to be fueled by the public service motive of their profession- the feeling that they are working for the public good, not just for their private benefit.

Structure and Language of News Stories