



SRI RAMAKRISHNA ENGINEERING COLLEGE

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Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives Volume 2

Editor
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Grammar and Style in Media Language

P. Ishwaria, M.Phil. Scholar

Writing for the Mass Media-Newspapers

Good writing, especially for the mass media, should be clear, concise, simple and to the point. It transmits information ideas and feelings to the reader clearly but without overstatement. It does not draw attention to itself and does not try to show off the writer's intelligence. It lets the content speak for itself, and it allows readers to receive message directly. Writing should not get in the way of what people/ need and want to read.

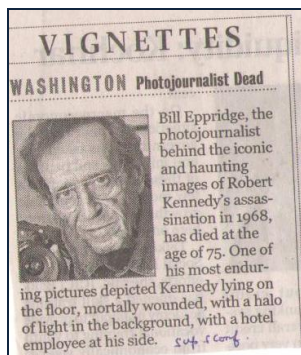
Lucidity, brevity and precision are lacking in the stories appearing in some of the Indian newspapers. They are hyperbolic, exaggerated, superficial, verbose and confusing.

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SAMPLE 1



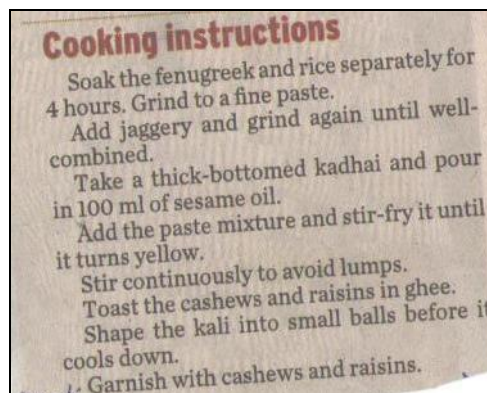
SAMPLE 2

The given samples have elements of hyperbolicism, exaggeration, verbosity and are confusing.

The journalistic write up should not use words that are generally used in everyday conversation. If one wants to use a word that may be unfamiliar to an ordinary reader, he should explain it in parentheses. The misuse of adjectives and adverbs could be avoided in the newspaper.



SAMPLE 3



SAMPLE 4

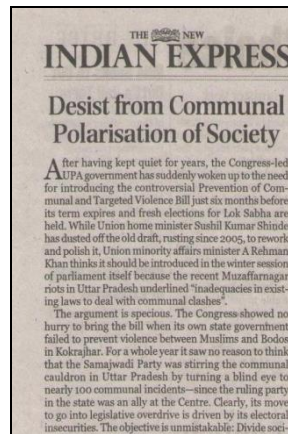
Adjectives need not be used in political news whereas use of adjectives is a must in sports news without which sports news is not possible (Sample3). While giving instructions one need not make use of adjectives (Sample4).

There is a notion that grammatical articles can be dispensed within the story/write up .The result has been to encourage a kind of telegraphic writing in which ‘the’, ‘a’, ‘an’ are bowled over like ninepins. This is wrong. Articles are essential parts of the English language and structure of sentences and they are vital to convey the proper meaning and emphasis of a story.

Jargon is the technical language that is used in specialized fields or among a small group of people with a common interest. Scientists, lawyers, sportswriters and even students have their own jargon. Good writers, especially those who write for the mass media, use words and phrase that are commonly understood by most people. They are very strict about not overloading their scripts with jargon. Sample 5 is an example of jargonized writing.



SAMPLE 5



SAMPLE 6

Clichés are overused words, phrases and clauses. They are groups of words that have ceased to be meaningful and have become trite and tiresome. Bureaucratese is a general name for a serious misuse of the language unnecessary and imprecise phrasing can be avoided.

The news write-up here (Sample 6) could have avoided unnecessary and imprecise phrasing so that the story becomes an easy task for the readers.

Most newspapers in Indian languages focus on the readability of the news they present. They give more importance to the language which makes the reader comeback to the newspaper. In a newspaper, headlines occupy an important role by giving important information in a nutshell. It facilitates a comprehensive, quick and fast reading for its readers. The choice of expression plays a vital role in making the headlines more effective and the language aims at

educating the readers. The newspaper should aim at educating people both in terms of content and language. Some newspapers seek sensationalism in content and expression.



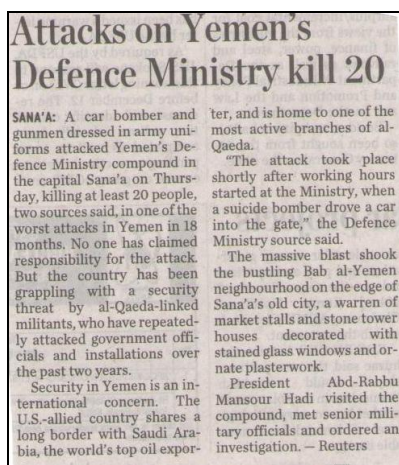
SAMPLE 7

The newspapers are educators of the literate and not the elite public. Now-a-days newspapers are read widely and the habit is growing rapidly. Therefore, language education through newspapers is expanding.

Style in Media Language

In media writing, style is the general orientation a writer has towards his/her work. Style is the set of conventions and assumptions underlying the writing and the generally accepted rules of writing and usage for a particular medium. The three most important concepts of media writing are accuracy, brevity and clarity.

The aim of any writer for the mass media is to be accurate which should be factually correct and expressed appropriately. Clear writing is an art, but it is also a skill, expressing thoughts, ideas and facts in a succinct way. It is one of the most difficult tasks though it may seem to be easy. The key to clear writing understands the subjects in all clarity.



SAMPLE 8

The given piece of news story has clarity, brevity, time sequence and it is written in chronological order so that the story is not confusing to the readers. The writer must take care to remove unnecessary phrases and eliminate redundancies.

Writing for Broadcast

The four Cs (Correctness, Clarity, Conciseness and Colour) still serve as the basis for broadcast writing and form a good framework for talking about broadcast writing styles. The broadcast journalist should be much concerned about correctness or accuracy. Broadcast writers must use simple sentences and familiar words as the listeners cannot go back to the news item as they do with print forms. The news reader can avoid the use of pronouns and repeat proper nouns if necessary and keep subject close to the verb in their sentences. Another important characteristic of writing for broadcast is its conversational style. Even the clearest, simplest newspaper style sounds pompous when it is read aloud. Broadcast writing must be more conversational because people will be reading it aloud as it should be written for the ear and not the eye.

This casual or conversational style does not give the writer freedom to break the rules of grammar or to use slangs that might be offensive to the listeners but he should focus on the content of the writing and not the writing itself. Another characteristic of broadcast writing is the emphasis on the immediate. Although past tense verbs are preferred in the print media, broadcasters use the present tense. When a newspaper or website story might begin like this:

The president said that the country needed experts who would devise solutions to empower the marginalized, give them basic facilities and opportunities to be contributing members of the society.

The broadcast news story begins like this:

The president says we need to do much more for marginalized sections.

The tight phrasing that characterizes broadcast writing is one of its chief assets and one of the most difficult qualities a writer should develop.

Writing the Advertisement

One of the oldest advertising copywriting formulas is A-I-D-A: attention, interest, desire, action. According to this formula, an ad in electronic media should do four things. First it should gain the attention of the viewer or listener and must hold his or her interest. The language should create a desire for product, service and idea and stimulate the buyer to buy. The advertising language should use simple and clear English. The writer should pay attention to verbs. Good copywriters use verbs rather than adjectives to describe their product. Another rule in advertising copy is to stick with the present tense and the active voice. The present tense implies immediacy and puts the reader into an advertisement quickly. The active voice allows the writer to make a stronger statement than the passive voice. Too many facts is likely to confuse the reader or listener. Therefore one must be as specific as possible. The writer should be precise in the use of language. When the writer uses personal pronouns, especially *you*, the listener know that you are talking directly to him. Elements of a print advertisement must take care of illustration, headlines, subheads and the body copy. The body copy should have sentence fragments, avoid exaggeration and the copy should be interesting.



SAMPLE 9



SAMPLE 10

World Wide Web

The *World Wide Web* continues to grow and change and the electronic media has a great influence in our lives. It has immediacy, flexibility, permanency, capacity and interactivity.

It is much easier to broadcast or publish in web than in traditional print media. With the web, once information is available can be loaded within seconds and reaction to it could be coming soon. The web is flexible because it shows still pictures, videos and it can play sound

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recording. It will have more photos. The news items in a web can remain as long as the electronic storage space exists. Language and style in electronic media tries to gather the attention of the news seekers. The news seekers can be of any age as web of attracts people of all age groups unlike print media. The web news has lables, headlines, summaries, subheads, web logs, e-mail.

Lateral reporting is yet another way of reporting in web which is exclusive to it. The web lets us think laterally about what information a reader might need or what form that information should take. Below (Sample 11) is a straight news story about a local event. With the web, journalists have considered the different possibilities that the story might offer.

Lateral Reporting and Web Package – Sample 11



Conclusion

News must have some element of the unusual about it. The basic qualities of news are accuracy, interest and timeliness. Newspaper must present a balanced view of the community, state, nation and the world beyond our borders. To do so it requires a certain amount of skill, patience and understanding. The newspapers today have started seeking the attention of common man who has the nose for the news rather than the elite milieu. On the other hand electronic media like television and radio serve the purpose of reaching the non-literates who are in fact their targets. Web media today is doing a great job attracting people of all age with its innovative techniques disseminating information.

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