

FACTFILE:

GCSE

JOURNALISM IN THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

UNIT 3: INDUSTRY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



Conventions of TV Journalism

Part 1, Section A: Technology, Conventions and Modern Journalism

CONVENTIONS OF TV JOURNALISM

Purpose of Factfile?

To enable students to develop knowledge and understanding of TV conventions in journalism.

Specific Learning Outcomes supported by the FactFile?

Students should be able to identify, consider and define the purpose of the following technical and presentational features and conventions used in TV news platforms, and analyse their effectiveness in relation to the target audience:

- mode of address and the way in which information is presented and how that varies across formats/programmes;
- the role of:
 - newsreaders and presenters;
 - reporters and correspondents;
 - contributors (for example experts, witnesses and members of the public);
- actuality footage;
- piece to camera;
- cut away;
- voice-over (VO);
- two-way interview;
- links to the studio; and
- graphics.

Target audience? Student? Teacher? Both?

Teachers and Students.

How the FactFile supports development of Key Stage 4 Statutory skills?

Opportunities for UICT, PS, WO and Comm throughout.

FactFile Content

Unit 3 of the GCSE Journalism course is assessed through an online examination, and Section A of the exam draws on students' knowledge of TV conventions, among other topics. This factfile is intended to clarify definitions, suggest starting points for the teaching of TV journalism conventions and offer ideas for further research. Similar factfiles on the conventions of radio, print and online formats, the role and purpose of journalism, technology and modern journalism, professional roles in journalism and journalism law, regulation and ethics are also available from the CCEA microsite.



TV Journalism

For many, TV journalism in the form of news programmes or bulletins is their first exposure to any form of journalistic reporting. Even those who do not have a TV at home can still routinely see television news broadcast on screens in public locations such as waiting rooms, bars and gyms; across the world, TV journalists are among the most recognisable of their ilk and current affairs programming maintains the status of a national institution.

TV journalism itself covers factual programming: news, current affairs and documentaries. It is important that you can accurately identify the various codes and conventions of television journalism in these three formats, as well as discuss the reasons why they are so widely used. By taking the time to examine and work out where, when and how certain conventions are used, you will be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in your answers to both short-form exam questions and longer, more analytical questions.

Conventions of the Medium

Like all audio-visual media, TV journalism uses both images and sounds to construct meaning for the viewer. It may report on a wide range of topics and (like other forms of journalism) is often required to produce content quickly, but certain conventions are maintained throughout.

Technological advances in communication and editing software, the proliferation of digital channels and the popularity of 24 hour 'rolling news' are all factors that have affected delivery of factual content, while the popularity of streaming services such as Netflix has had a positive impact on audiences' access to and subsequent demand for documentary film making. Factual programming has several factors at its heart: the intention to inform, efforts to appear fair and unbiased, and attempts to connect with and engage (in some cases, even entertain) the audience. Each of these is subject to a great deal of interpretation, even within the parameters of what can be deemed 'factual'; you will gain a better understanding of this as you view a wide variety of programme extracts.



Definitions

The following are not intended to be exhaustive definitions of TV conventions, they are provided for the purposes of general clarification and as a starting point for further study. Some sources may offer alternative terminology for the same conventions in which case, please use what is here to guide you in the first instance and ensure you use reliable and reputable sources when researching.

Mode of address

Broadly speaking, the manner in which a media text chooses to communicate with its audience. Most of this is based on contextual information such as the purpose and format of the text, the demographic(s) at which it is aimed, the intended effect and so forth. The purpose of a TV news bulletin, for example, is to inform, but through multifarious choices about who presents the show, their appearance and demeanour, the design of the studio, the choice of 'angle' and language used to tell the news story, the time given to it, the placement of it in the show's item list and many other factors, extra information is communicated to the audience, shaping their views on the story, the news programme and even the world itself. Mode of address is linked to the news values of any factual programme.

Student Activity: Ask students either in partners or in groups to watch three different TV news programmes and discuss the different mode of address used in each. It will be more effective if the intended target audiences of each news programme are very different. Students should work together to define tone, register and anything else that they feel has been important in communicating the intended meaning to the target audience.

The role of newsreaders and presenters

Newsreaders and presenters are responsible for presenting the information contained in a TV news programme. They ‘anchor’ the programme and primarily introduce reports, conduct two ways with reporters or correspondents on location, deliver links and/or interview guests. Their personas are carefully chosen and constructed to gel with the programme, and their appearances, voices, style of presentation and demeanor are an important component of the show’s mode of address. In some cases they can function as a unique selling point (USP) for the programme and attract viewers in their own right.

The role of reporters and correspondents

Reporters and correspondents are responsible for covering stories, usually by travelling to a location associated with the event and finding sources upon which they can build their report. They may have individual responsibility within their organisation for covering a country or other geographical area or a particular topic (e.g. home affairs, war, royalty or the arts). On location they will often find sources, conduct interviews, deliver reportage and edit recorded material for transmission. They may also report live from the scene, informing the studio presenter of events as they unfold.

The role of contributors

Contributors are the additional voices called upon to comment on events, which may be integrated into the report as a live interview (e.g. a lawyer outside law courts after a verdict) or as edited excerpts (e.g. a short excerpt from a political statement by a politician delivered earlier in the day). They might also take part in a two way interview with a presenter or reporter, or in a discussion with other contributors with differing viewpoints. Contributors can include experts explaining the detail of a situation, witnesses giving testimony, or members of the public offering opinions on a topic related to the story. The latter is sometimes referred to as “vox pops” (from Latin for ‘voice of the people’) and is intended to give a quick cross section of the views of “ordinary people” on a particular subject.

Having a variety of viewpoints on a story provides interest for the viewer as well as supporting the idea of objectivity by reflecting more than one person’s viewpoint on an issue.

Student Activity: Ask students to research and prepare brief career profiles of the professional

roles above above, finding one illustrative example of each role taken from a news programme they have watched. What are the similarities between the roles? How do the roles differ? Students can use their findings to draft more specific job descriptions for each role.

Actuality footage

Unscripted live-filmed footage of something taking place or happening in real time. It is present to give the audience a greater sense of immediacy and proximity to the event being discussed.

Student Activity: Ask students to find two examples of where actuality footage is used in TV news. Students should describe the function of the footage in each piece. What does it add for the audience? What effect does it have?

Piece to camera

When a reporter or correspondent talks directly to the camera on location, this is described as a piece to camera. Pieces to camera are a way of establishing the reporter or correspondent at a location relevant to the story, adding impact and context, and bringing immediacy to a report. They may be prerecorded and form part of a report or may be live. In the latter case the reporter or correspondent usually talks to the presenter in the studio but may also interview contributors at the scene. With a developing story, a live PTC allows the reporter to give updates and interact directly with the studio presenter. Done well, this format can show the audience that the reporter is in the thick of the action, right where events are unfolding. Though usually structured to some extent beforehand, pieces to camera are more natural in style and not as heavily scripted as a presenter’s contribution. While not suitable for every story, they can add variety to a news programme, keeping viewers interested.

Student Activity: Watch two examples of a piece to camera. Based on what they have seen, they should write a short set of guidelines for new journalists on how to successfully deliver such a piece and when it might work best in a story. Using a print or online story covered in a local or national paper, write a script for a piece to camera as if you were about to cover the same story for TV broadcast.

Cut away

Literally cutting away from the main action to show another shot – perhaps a different angle of the same subject or an incidental subject nearby. Often

there is little narrative motivation for a cut away shot other than to provide a different perspective or some visual interest for the viewer; cut aways can be useful buffers between shots because of this. Sometimes they may provide extra detail, e.g. a shot of the hands of a person being interviewed about a traumatic experience may show vulnerability or help hide their face/protect their identity as well as providing a little more variety for the viewer.

Student Activity: Give students a range of news programmes and/or documentary sequences to watch, which feature varied use of cut aways. Ask students to make a note of the different ways in which cut aways have been used. Students should take a screengrab of one example of a cut away together with the shot immediately before and after it, and annotate beside the three images to explain why they think the cut away was used at that point, why the cameraperson chose the particular subject he or she cut away to, and what effect this achieved.

Voice-over (VO)

Voice-over narration accompanies shots to contextualise them. It can help provide anchorage and shape the overall news story or the argument in a documentary. It is recorded separately from the images being shot and is added to footage in post-production.

Student Activity: Ask students to watch examples of how voice over narration is used in different TV news stories or documentaries. Using a print or online news story from a local or national newspaper, ask them to jot down some ideas for shots they would film if covering the same story for television, and write a voiceover to accompany them. Swapping with a partner, they should critique each others' work and write a set of guidelines together giving suggestions for what a voiceover should and should not do.

Two-way interview

Two-way interviews are when a news reader or presenter interviews a contributor, reporter or correspondent, who is sometimes in the studio or may be in another location. They can be an effective way to explain complicated issues in a simple, informal manner, provide expert analysis and allow different views to be aired. They are usually pre-scripted to some extent, for example with the reporter supplying key questions for the presenter. However, it is a flexible format and should be as close to a natural conversation as possible.

Student Activity: Ask students to watch the video "The Art of the Two-Way Interview Training Video" (see link in Additional Information Sources reference list). Students should consider the following questions in light of the video: "What is a Two-way interview?", "Why do we use it?" and "How can we successfully deliver a good Two-way interview?".

Links to the studio

Links to studio refer to audio and/or audio-visual link-ups (for example, satellite or video call) through which an interviewee in another location can take part in a TV news broadcast, for example as part of a studio panel discussion. Links to studio can be presented in a variety of different ways and can be used for different types of news stories and reports. These links can connect with reporters and/or correspondents employed by the news studio who are out on location and also with a wide range of external contributors (such as witnesses, experts, members of the public etc.).

Student Activity: Before giving students a definition of this convention ask them to work with a partner to try and define what this convention might mean and when or why it might be used. Give students a range of TV news programmes to watch and ask them to find two or three instances of links being used. How did their definition compare to what they found? How easy or difficult was it to find examples of a link to studio?

Graphics

Graphics are on screen images used to explain or clarify the story in a visual and easy to understand way. They are usually integrated into a report and are often used to show numbers in economic stories, statistics and other complex information. They are also an established feature of live electoral coverage, showing results as they are declared across constituencies for example. They may also be used as on screen branding to visually identify a long running story, for example an election campaign or a war. They are being used in increasingly diverse and creative ways as technology improves and help to add interest for viewers. This short video by the BBC Academy contains an overview and examples: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/article/art20130702112133508>

Student Activity: Ask students to screengrab examples of different uses of graphics in a range of news programmes. Students should explain the

different types of graphic and their functions to a partner. Students can annotate and comment on some of the choices they made in a graphical representation – colours, fonts or motion/animation for example – and try to explain how these choices relate back to the format of the programme, its mode of address and its intended audience.



Questions to consider

- Which TV programmes are most likely to use each of the features above, and in what context?
- Why are different features used by different formats? How do they affect the programme's mode of address in each instance?
- Can I recognise examples of each TV journalism feature and correctly identify it in a variety of contexts?

Additional information sources

BBC Bitesize

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zquqh39>

Journalism.co.uk

<https://www.journalism.co.uk/>

8 Top Tips to Become a Great TV Reporter

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/collegeofjournalism/entries/7c6a8e1d-3803-3900-8ec9-97dcfde7a43a>

How to Become a Broadcast Journalist

<http://www.journalismdegree.com/become-broadcast-journalist/>

Top Ten Tips for Aspiring Journalists

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jennagoudreau/2012/11/09/top-10-tips-for-young-aspiring-journalists/#1573d5c138df>

Print vs Broadcast Journalism: Understand the Differences

<https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/print-journalism-vs-broadcast-journalism/>

Media Knowall

<http://mediaknowall.com/gcse/news/news.php?pageID=tvnews>

The Art of the Two-Way Interview Training Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsXCpLvT8LU>

