

“News As Infotainment: A Discourse Analysis of Top Pakistani Cable News Channels”

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In the twenty first century, television journalism has witnessed immense development and transformation. News agencies have emerged as global 24-hours news outlets. The news values and traditions have undergone considerable change making revenues generation a top priority. This was consequential upon using language and other semiotic resources like visuals and sound for incorporating entertainment, sensationalism, suspense and informality in news. Through these techniques viewers could be attracted and higher rating figures could be achieved. The broadcast news media industry of Pakistan has developed a lot after the 2002 media reforms under Musharraf's regime. Vast changes have also been observed in both the style and contents of broadcast news. This research study focuses on increasing trend of infotainment in Pakistani broadcast news. Using the perspectives of linguistic and semiotic analysis, this study has documented that nowadays information is very much mixed with entertainment techniques to make news interesting, sensational and appealing for viewers. This reflects that the broadcast journalism has become profit oriented and therefore all possible resources are exploited to tailor a news discourse which is tinged with subtle infotainment.

Keywords: television news, entertainment, commercialization, infotainment.

In the twenty-first century, “we navigate through a vast mass media environment unprecedented in human history” (Croteau & Hoynes, 2000). Digital media is fast establishing itself as the most widely used and most popular information/news source. Even it looks that the current battleground is smart phone because the growth in mobile use for news across many markets continues to accelerate (Newman et al., 2015). Although digital media users (especially younger people) are fast increasing in number and traditional television viewing is declining but television cannot be replaced overnight and it has remained successful in maintaining its important position (Nielsen & Sambrook, 2017). This is evident from the fact that in January 2016, Facebook reported that its users watch a total of 100 million hours of video every day and Netflix subscribers stream on average about 116 million hours of video every day. By comparison, the US population alone watches more than 1,000 million hours of television every day (Nielsen & Sambrook, 2017). In developing countries (like Pakistan) where literacy rate is low, proportion of television viewing is still higher as compared to use of digital platforms. There is no denying the fact that a tough competition is going on between digital media and television, but until now television has sustained its important position in both developed and developing countries.

Apart from entertainment programming, television is also a very important source of daily news. But there has stirred up a general unrest in the world regarding the quality and values of news.

It is argued that a change has occurred in television news globally, which has proved a source of concern, not only for those who study, consume or produce television news but for society as a whole. Thussu (2007) is of the view that the changes in television broadcasting are a result of privatization of global communication hardware and software, the deregulation of broadcasting and the technological convergence between television, telecommunication and computing industries. Television is no more a public institution but a private ratings-conscious organization which is dependent on advertising revenues or subscriptions, and broadcasts to a heterogeneous audience, hence all this will have implications for news agendas and editorial priorities. The result is that news quality, traditions and values have altogether changed. Not only journalistic practices have changed but also news discourse is transformed. The news broadcasters borrow and adapt features of entertainment genres and modes of conversation that lend an informal communicative style to news with its emphasis on celebrities, style, storytelling skills and show off.

Another turn that news industry took, has been exemplified in USA and that is the “acquiring of key news networks by conglomerates whose primary interest is in the entertainment business” (Thussu, 2007). This shift in ownership is reflected in the type of stories – about celebrities from the world of entertainment, for example – that often get prominence on news, thus strengthening corporate synergies (Bennett, 2003a). These practices are further strengthened by introducing new genre of reality TV and its relatives – docudramas, celebrity talk shows, court and crime enactments, rescue missions. The budding global popularity of such infotainment-driven news programming signifies the success of this hybrid formula. Now, all news outlets around the globe have stepped on the path of broadcasting news as infotainment. But what is meant, precisely, by the newly introduced word “infotainment”. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, infotainment is ‘broadcast material which is intended both to entertain and to inform,’ while the *Key Concepts in Political Communication* defines it as ‘the combination of the words information and entertainment, suggesting a practice of blending together of their presentation within the broadcasting of news and current affairs’ (Lilleker, 2006). Thus the phenomenon of infotainment denotes a type of television news where entertainment is mixed with information and where style is given priority over substance.

Television in Pakistan

Media (like newspapers and radio) has existed in Pakistan since independence. However, the first official television station commenced initial black and white transmission on 26 November 1964 from Lahore (Zuberi, 2001). For over 50 years TV broadcast was state controlled. People got one side of the story. The broadcasts comprised state news and entertainment programming. But media ecology is never static. It keeps on changing with the passage of time. In early 2001, this all changed. With globalization, reforms and the increasing internet penetration, the government was forced to bring in reforms to the broadcasting industry. A new era had begun. According to Singh and Kukreja (2014) “PTV’s state-monopoly came to an end in 2003 when the market for electronic media was liberated. This led to the boom in new private TV channels” (149). Banerjee and Logan (2008) state about the freedom of Pakistani media that, “A major change is witnessed in the flow of information ever since the promulgation of the “Freedom of Expression Ordinance 2002”. One can see a substantial policy shift with regard to freedom of media particularly electronic media” (395).

Today, there is intense competition among television channels. Due to fierce competition and new trends set globally by the West, Pakistani news channels, especially, are adopting styles of entertainment to reach a wider consumer base. Language or news discourse is full of colloquial

vocabulary, short sentences, rhyming words, interesting idioms, humor, pictures, footages, sounds and music. In one way or another, infotainment is a key characteristic of contemporary news programs in the Pakistan audiovisual space. While some twenty to thirty years back, news was considered a formal domain and was presented in a sober and serious style by decent news anchors like Abdussalam, Ishrat Fatima, Shaista etc. but now anchors are very fashionable girls clad in modern dresses and reading from auto-cues in high-tech studios. Mezzera and Sial (2010) state, 'The Urdu media relies greatly on sensationalism...In the electronic media landscape, this trend of sensationalism can also be explained by the pressing need to be the first to deliver breaking news, thereby getting better ratings and winning popularity' (p.39).

Method

For the present research study, data consists of two consecutive weeks' videos of news headlines of top Pakistani news channels i.e. Express News channel and Samaa News channel. The headlines have been recorded from 9 o'clock news slot at night. Express and Samaa are the most popular private channels that also stand at the top of ratings figures in Pakistan. They are both 24/7 news channels which are available on both television sets and online. The headlines videos have been recorded directly from an LCD television with the help of a sophisticated camera.

For an interpretive, qualitative study, the data of Urdu news has been recorded and transcribed in Roman English script for example, '*Karachi me aman-o-amaan ki bigarti hui surat-e-haal*'. The whole transcription has been italicized for distinguishing it from English script. English translation of whole Urdu data has also been given for English readers.

The discourse analytical framework is chosen for this study as we have to look at both language as well as audio-visual part of news. This framework enables us to do linguistic analysis for understanding language; and semiotic analysis for explaining audio-visual part. Linguistic analysis, being a scientific study of language has very vast scope embracing semantics (deeper study of meaning), syntax (understanding structure), morphology (formation of words), lexicology (word study), phonology (close study of sound) etc, but obviously all these vast areas cannot be covered in limited space of a research paper. Therefore, keeping in view space restraints, I have focused on these categories e.g. choice of words/vocabulary, idioms/sayings, metaphors, incorporating humor and satire, and use of rhyme. Analysis of these lexical and semantic categories will not only be helpful to spot infotainment element in news but also why it is happening.

Semiotic analysis of visuals and sound will also be done. 'Semiotics is generally described as the study of signs. For a sign to exist, there must be meaning or content (the *signified*) manifested through some form of expression or representation (the *sign*)' (Harrison, 2003:2). In recent times, semiotics has evolved as an important approach for the study of social production of meaning in various contexts. Meanings or messages are communicated through specific signs, for instance, the green traffic signal, image of a dove, billboards of ads, symbols on mobile phone screens, human symbol on doors of toilets, etc. 'Indeed, we can define a culture as a set of semiotic systems, a sets of systems of meaning, all of which interrelate' (Halliday & Hasan, 1985: 4). Hence, it will not be wrong to say that human life and practices today are confined within the bounds of semiotic systems. Although a deep and extensive semiotic analysis of visuals and sound is not possible within one research paper however effort will be done to highlight important aspects/techniques/codes of semiotic activity and why they have been incorporated in news stories.

Results and Discussion

The Linguistic Analysis of Express News and Samaa News Channels

In order to comprehend the infotainment aspect in news headlines, first the analysis of language is done according to above mentioned categories. In the collected data of news headlines, vocabulary/word-choice has been found to be very informal, plain and colloquial. News writers try to make news more entertaining than a plain, sober delivery of facts. Therefore they choose informal/colloquial language for news writing. There are myriads of examples in the data but due to limited space of a research paper, few instances are being presented below.

Express News

- *Aaj ki sub se barri khabar, Wazir-e-azam khud Imran Khan se milney un ki rihashgah pohncb gaey, Protocol k baghair gaari Chaudhry Nisaar ne drive ki, Donon rehnumaon ka Talibaan se muzakiraat jaari rakhney per itifaaq* (A big news, the Prime Minister himself showed up at the residence of Imran Khan to see him, Chaudhary Nisaar drove P.M's car without any protocol, both leaders agreed to continue talks on Talibaan problem)
- *Sindh hakoomat thar ki tarah Khair Pur me bhi lapata, Wazir-e-Aalaa k apney shehr ka zara haal mulahiza karen, talibaat k liay school bana dia dakhley bhi open, lekin sirf bhainson k liay, Wah Shah G Wah* . (Sindh Govt. is missing in Khairpur as it was missing in Thar, just cast a look at Chief Minister's own city, a school has been set up for girls and admissions are also open but for buffaloes only, Wao Shah G Wao)
- *Pakistan ki T-Twenty world Cup me Bismillah, Warm-Up match me New Zealand ko shikast dey ker khud ko recharge ker lia, Professor ki dhuwan dhaar fifty, to Kamran ne bhi bat per jami gard jhari, ab bhaarat se do do haath hon gay.* (with the name of God Pakistani team has stepped into T-Twenty World Cup, In warm-up match, team has recharged itself by defeating New Zealand, Professor scored a very fast fifty, Kamran also showed magic of his bat, now next match is with India)
- *Pakistan se itni chir kyoum Bibi? Stadium me sabz hilali percham lehrata dekh ker Hasina Wajid jal bhun gaen, Bangladeshi shaiqeen kisi aur mulk ka jhanda na uthaen, Dhaka police ko hidayaat jaari ker di gaen* (O Lady, Why do you sneer at Pakistan? On seeing the flying green flag of Pakistan in stadium, Hasina Wajid felt extremely jealous, She ordered Dhaka Police to check that no Bangladeshi spectator should carry flag of Pakistan)

In the above examples, non-serious and informal tone of news language is vivid for example use of words like "wah Shah G wah (wao Sha G wao)", lapata (missing), dakhley bhainson k liay (admissions for buffaloes), jal bhun gaen, Bismillah, recharge, chir (sneer)" refer to light, entertaining tone of news stories.

Samaa News

- *Lahore ki taqrib me jiaalay phat paray, jamhoori sawal ka jamhoora jawab, kisi ne munh chupaya to kisi ne mike band karaya* (Jiaalay blew up in a ceremony in Lahore, democratic reply of democratic question, someone concealed his face and someone switched off mike)
- *Lala rang jamaey ga, team ko jitaey ga, shaeqeen ne umiden bandh leen, shahid afridi ne bhi dat ker khailney ka ailaan ker dia* (Lala will surely have good show of his game and get success for team, spectators are hopeful and Shahid Afridi also promised to show good performance)
- *Saeen to saeen, saeen ki opposition bhi saeen, Sindh assembly me qarardaad Kamran akhtar ka imtihaan ban gai, saathion ne bhi ki rehnumai lekin baat phir bhi ban na paai* (Not only Saeen is great, his opposition in assembly is also great, the resolution became a big test for Kamran)

Akhtar and though his friends also helped him but still he could not read that bill due to stage fear)

- *Chhakay chhura diay, totay bhi ura diay, Ahmed Shehzad ki shandaar century, aur lala ney to maar hi dala* (stunning job, Ahmed Shehzad scored a century and Lala almost smashed every cricketer)
- *Karachi ka target killer Lahore se griftaar, ahlkaron ki mulzim ki moonchhon se chhair chhaar* (A target killer of Karachi has been arrested in Lahore, police cops play with his bushy moustache)
- *Gulloo, billoo, pomi aur nomi k baad ab Mina Butt maidaan me* (After Gulloo, Billoo, Pomi and Nomi, now Mina Butt has entered the arena of political violence)

In the above examples, use of informal words like “*jiaalay phat paray* (Jiaalay blew up), *jamhoora jawab, rang jamaey ga, Saeen to saeen, saeen ki opposition bhi saeen, Chhakay chhura diay, totay bhi ura diay*, fortify the stance that colloquial vocabulary helps media to be close to its audience and get popularity and consequent ratings. This closeness is further exhibited by calling nick names of the workers of N-League “*Gulloo, billoo, pomi aur nomi k baad ab Mina Butt*”.

The use of idioms and sayings is also conspicuous in news. Idioms and proverbs are used by news writers to signify impact, entertainment and embellishment. The idiomatic language is represented by underlined expressions.

Express news

- *Laton k bhoot baton se nahi mantey, baar baar warning k bawajud baat na bani to Karachi me baldia uzma ki heavy machinery harkat me aa gaye* (sometimes opposition is crushed with iron hands, after many warnings eventually heavy machinery of Karachi Municipality came into action)
- *NA-122 dhaandli case me record ho gaya bayaan, PTI chief kehtey hen thailay kholo billi nikaalo* (in NA-122 rigging case the statement has been recorded, PTI chief says open bags to bring out cat)
- *Karachi k zakhmon per aaj bhi marham kisi ne na rakha, golian chalti raheen, lashen girti raheen, mazeed 6 zindgiyon k charagh gul*, (none put balm on the wounds of Karachi, firing went on, innocent citizens kept falling like sparrows, six more people were shot dead)
- *Thar me jahan dekhien sirf bhook aur bimarion k dairay, aaj bhi mot ne do nanheen janen dikaar leen* (hunger and disease have camped everywhere in Thar, today again death devoured two small children/babies)
- *Chiragh taley andhera who bhi ghatta tope, Karachi me special investigation unit k ahlkaaron k aghwa ki waardaton aur bhatta khori me mulawis honey ka inkishaf, tawan wasoul kartey waqat do pakray gaye, Jinnah colony me manshariat firoshon ki firing se police waley titter bitter, targeted operation khaak karen gay* (there is always complete darkness under lamp, Special Investigation Cops of Karachi have been found involved in kidnapping and racketeering, two were arrested red handed while collecting ransom, in Jinnah colony policemen ran away when drug-sellers opened fire, how they will do targeted operation?)

Samaa news

- *Haira pheri kaam na aai*, (tricking is of no consequence)
Multan me choron ki shamat aai, (thieves arrested in Multan)
shehriyon ne ki khoob dhulaii, (citizens did a good beating)
police ne nijaat dilai, (police came to the rescue)
to jaan me jaan aai (only then thieves took breath)

- *Piyasey sehra me aaj bhi mot ki chinghaar sunai deti rahi, mazeed teen nenhi janen zindgi k bojh se aazaad* (today again horrible sound of death could be heard in thirsty desert of Thar, three more babies died of hunger and disease)
- *130 zindgian behissi ki diwaron se sir takrra takrra ker dam torr gaein, lekin zimadaar doodh k dhulay ban gaey, siasi asr-o-rasukh ka harrba aazmaya aur transfer kerwa ker chaltey baney* (130 lives perished while struggling against the indifference, but the responsible officers made high claims of purity/piety and they transferred themselves to other areas through using political influence)
- *Chhakay chhura diay, totay bhi ura diay, Ahmed Shehzad ki shandaar century, aur lala ney to maar hi dala* (stunning job, Ahmed Shehzad scored a century and Lala almost smashed every cricketer)

Above mentioned idioms are tinged with informal colors that are meant to please and surprise the viewers.

The use of metaphors in news headlines is also quite common. Newmark (1988) describes twofold purpose of metaphor: cognitive-referential and aesthetic-pragmatic. He says, 'Its referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept... its pragmatic purpose, which is simultaneous, is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise'(1988: 104). Thus metaphors are the signifiers that connote different values for example positivity or negativity, novelty, informality or formality, entertainment (infotainment), impact, sensationalism etc. Examples of metaphors from Express and Samaa channels are as under. Metaphors have been underlined.

- *Difai numaish se mutasir ho ker Imran Khan ka bhi siaasi mizile program ka ailaan* (being impressed by Defence Exhibition, Imran Khan also announced political missile program)
- *Do mahiney baad akhir kaar barf pighal hi gai, Jehangir tareen k gher per Ahsan Iqbal aur Asad Omer ki baithak* (ice melted eventually after two months, Ahsan Iqbal and Asad Omer met at the residence of Jehangir Tareen)
- *Hakoomat ne dollar giraya mana barra karnama, lekin fuel adjustment ka barood bher ker electric drone barsaa dia, bijli mazid do rupay chobis paisay mahngi* (Govt. dropped value of Dollar is a big deal all admit, but on other hand it fired electric drone full of 'fuel adjustment' explosives, two rupees and twenty-four paisay increase in electricity price)
- *Shahinon ne youm-e-Pakistan yaadgaar bana dia, Mir Poor stadium me pehley chokon chhakon ki sunami aai to 191 runs ka pahaarr kharra ho gaya, phir vikton ka toofan machha to Australvi bating nizaam darhum berhum, 175 per maidan baddar* (Pakistani Eagles made Pakistan Day a memorable day, in Mir Poor Stadium there came a tsunami of sixes and boundaries, then a mountain was erected of 191 runs, then storm of wickets started blowing which uprooted the bating-line of Australia, all were swepted out of ground on 175 runs)
- *Sindh hakoomat mutasireen-e-sehra k zakhmon per beyhissi ka namak chirrik ker tarpaney lagi, Ghotki me aik laakh se zaid gandam ki borian kiron ki khuraak ban gaeen lekin kisi martey insaan k paait tek na pohcheen, aaj bhi chhay bachay bilak bilak ker dam torr gaey* (Sindh govt. is torturing the hunger and disease stricken people of the desert Thar through total indifference, there were more than one lack wheat sacks lying in godowns of Ghotki that became food for worms but these were not distributed to the starving people of Thar, today again six children died)
- *Pehley over me hee 'babar mezzile' kangrooz ki bunyaden hila gaya, khaternaak bowler Shen Watson per haath saaf kia, Saeed, Gul, Bhatti bhi waqfay waqfay se waar kertey rahey, fatah*

miltey hee bharat se haar per udaas chehray khil uthey, mulk bher me jashan (even in first over Babar missile shook the foundations of Kangaroos, they bowled the dangerous bowler Shen Watson, Saeed, Gul and Bhatti kept hitting intermittently, sad faces on losing match from India bloomed once again on this new victory, there is happiness and merriment on this victory in the whole country).

The news writers commonly incorporate humorous or satiric tone in news. In this way, they make news entertaining. Some striking examples of headlines from Express and Samaa news are as under:

- *Sindh hakoomat thar ki tarah Khair Pur me bhi lapata, Wazir-e-Aalaa k apney shehr ka zara haal mulahiza karen, talibaat k liay school bana dia dakhley bhi open, lekin sirf bhainson k liay, Wah Shah G Wah* (Sindh Govt. is missing in Khairpur as it was missing in Thar, just cast a look at Chief Minister's own city, a school has been set up for girls and admissions are also open but only for buffaloes, Wao Shah G Wao)
- *Chhakay chhura diay, totay bhi ura diay, Ahmed Shehzad ki shandaar century, aur lala ney to maar hi dala* (stunning job, Ahmed Shehzad scored a century and Lala almost smashed every cricketer)
- *Gulloo, Billoo, Pomi aur Nomi k baad ab Mina but maidaan me, andaa berdaar matwalon ko sarrkon per ley aya, khilariyon se tasadam hotey hotey reh gaya* (after Gulloo, Billoo, Pomi and Nomi, now Mina Butt has entered the arena, he brought Matwalays out on roads carrying eggs, only narrowly escaped clash with Khilaries)
- *Saeen ki yadaasht phir daghaa dey gai, Data darbaar se nikley ajab kaif-o-masti me apni garri hee bhool gaey, jiaalon ne yaad dilla dia.* (Saeen's memory again deceived him, he got out of Dataa Darbaar in such an entranced condition that he forgot his car, Jiaalays showed him to his car)
- *Saeen to saeen, saeen ki opposition bhi saeen, Sindh assembly me qarardaad Kamran akhtar ka imtihaan ban gai, saathion ne bhi ki rehnumai lekin baat phir bhi ban na paai* (Not only Saeen is great, his opposition in assembly is also great, the resolution became a big test for Kamran Akhtar and though his friends also helped him but still he could not read that bill due to stage fear)
- *Pakistani qaum ko baat manwaney ka behtareen tariqa mil gaya, sindh bher ki lady health workers mustaqilli ka nara ley ker maidaan me kood pareen, teen ghaney me hee kamyabi samait ker gharon ko chal deen, aap ka koi mutalba hey kia?* (Pakistani nation has grabbed the best way to get their demands fulfilled, Lady Health Workers from all over Sindh entered the arena chanting slogans of their future, within three hours they achieved triumph and went back homes, Do You have any demand?)
- *Amriki akhbaar NewYork Times ka hawaii fire, general Pasha ko Usama k thhikaney ka ilm tha, Bin Laden k tahafuz k liay Musharraf ne desk banaya, itney barray ilzamaat lekin koi saboot na gawaah* (American newspaper New York Times fired in the air, according to it General Pasha knew about the hide-out of Osama bin Laden, to protect Laden, Musharraf created a desk, Such big blames but without any evidence or witness)

Rhyme is also an important technique which is very prominently visible in daily news. Selected words have the same rhyming sound and they are arranged at the tailpiece of sentences. Rhyming words excite the sense of hearing and attract viewers (Reah, 1998). Instead of prosaic lines, rhyming lines feel more pleasure some. Examples are as, (underlined sentences show rhyme):

- *KPK me corruption k burj giraney ka ailaan, Plan C per datt gaey Imran Khan, aihitjaaj multawi kerna tehqiqati commission k faislay se mashroot* (announcement of demolishing big towers of corruption in KPK, Imran is resolute about Plan C, protest will only be postponed when Investigating Commission gives its verdict)
- *Sadiq kon speaker ya Kaptaan? Faisala peer tek aney ka mehmaan, NA-122 dhaandli case me record ho gaya bayaan, PTI chief kehney hen thailay kholo billi nikaalo* (Who is truthful Speaker or Captain?, Verdict will be given until Monday, for NA-122 rigging case statements have been recorded, PTI Chief says open the bags to bring out cat)
- *Kal ki tayari aaj se jaari, Lahore me PTI kal rang jamai gi, kitni street power he show ker k dikhaey gi* (preparations are on way for tomorrow's show in Lahore, PTI will demonstrate its street power tomorrow)
- *Lala rang jamaey ga, teem ko jitaey ga, shaeqeen ne umiden bandh leen, shahid afridi ne bhi dat ker khailney ka ailaan ker dia* (Lala will surely have good show of his game and get success for team, spectators are hopeful and Shahid Afridi also promised to show good performance)
- *Dehshatgardi wabal-e-jaan, Qaum ka sakht imtihaan, Dus baras me 80 arrab dollar ka nuqsaan, 50 hazaar afraad ki jaan bhi gai, Wizarat-e-dakhla ki report me inkishaaf* (terrorism is a great nuisance, it has proved a terrible ordeal for the whole nation, in ten years it cost Pakistan eighty billion dollars)

Arrangement of rhyming words at the tailpiece of sentences heightens the sensory impact and leaves a sweet impression on the ears of audience who would like to hear more before they stop watching news bulletin.

It is also found at various places that modifiers are used with nouns which further increase beauty, value and impact of news e.g. *bahimana qatl* (brutal murder), *dil dehla deney wala waqia* (adjective phrase with noun) (heart-rending incident), *piyasa sehra* (thirsty desert), *tapti rait* (sizzling sand), *ghazab ki zarben* (adjective phrase with noun) (ruthless strikes), *bhaari doze* (heavy dose), *thhos paighaam* (solid message), etc.

The above analysis of language of two selected news channels categorically exhibits that news writers work quite consciously to present news stories in such a way which not only deliver information but also serve the purpose of the news agencies. News agencies constantly pursue higher ratings from audience because this can guarantee higher advertising revenues. If these channels have to survive in environment of tough competition with emerging digital platforms then they think it suitable and necessary to add entertaining tints to the news stories. Therefore, wherever possible, different language techniques are employed to heighten infotainment and attract viewers. The art historian Ernst Gombrich argues that all art, however 'naturalistic' is 'a manipulation of vocabulary' rather than a reflection of the world (Gombrich, 1982, 70, 78, 100). Not only language but also the semiotic activity on news channels shows skilful use of semiotic resources to enhance entertainment factor. The following is the semiotic analysis of news channels.

Semiotic Analysis of Express and Samaa News

Media like internet and television are the biggest grounds of semiotic activity. Semiotic activity comprises the use of visuals and sound along with language to enhance the impact of discourse on television. Visuals and sound are signifiers which are used to deliver different messages or connotations to the audience.

The visual aspect of news discourse consists of still images, videos/footages and graphics. The aural/auditory aspect of news constitutes music, songs and various sounds. For understanding infotainment, an analysis of the use of semiotic resources by news writers on selected channels is given below.

Visual Analysis

In the collected data of Express and Samaa news, one can observe an extensive use of visuals. On one hand appealing screen layout and opening format are used and on other hand videos and still images augment the visual impression of news. Both channels i.e. Express and Samaa start news headlines with their specific opening format. Graphics, clocks, colors, etc. are used in opening format. Screen layouts contain news-tickers, special logo bugs, time and date etc. to look informative and visually appealing. High-tech studios and charming news anchors also enhance the visual impact.

Videos of different happenings also augment impact, sensationalism and entertainment. Every news story is covered by a video/footage, a still image or graphical representation of that news. The news writers also draw on special camera techniques while editing the videos for heightened visual effects. Examples are numerous, few are discussed here. On Express news channel, news about Liaary Gang-War in Karachi is escorted by video containing special camera techniques. Fast-paced shots appear one after another, showing the square where firing took place, policemen, terrified common public, images of gangsters, streets and houses. A spinning image of a tower with built-in statue of eagle on top of tower appears and instantly disappears. A sudden spin of this image of tower with eagle, actually signifies that everything is topsy-turvy in Liaary.

Special camera techniques are used in footage of Thar famine. The camera fastly zooms in on ailing infants from high and tilted angles to surprise the viewers by showing the predicament of small children. Many close-ups of children are also incorporated because close-ups are much more dramatic and exciting than long or medium shots. Then camera pans and zooms on people and barren land of Thar. In one shot, camera tracks parallel to ailing people heading towards hospital, in others, camera takes eye-level view of women and crying men. In another shot, camera tilts and pans to show the legal document of transfer which the responsible officers took to avoid the blame of Thar trouble.

The news about Katrina's fitness concerns, and Sonakshi's entry on modeling ramp are also dramatized with camera tilts, zooms and short, quick shots. All these many techniques convey meanings to the audience and attract their attention towards news contents.

Samaa channel also makes use of different camera angles, camera movements and shot sizes for increased impact. Detail is as under:

Different camera techniques can be seen in footage focusing the protest of PTI in Faisalabad. In first one second shot, camera tilts up from heads of protesters to the peak of the Faisalabad Tower and captures scene of procession. In other shots, different camera angles are used to take shots of the protest. In one shot the worm's eye angle is used to show a protester picking up stones to hurl on rival intruders. In later shots, the eye-level angle and high angle both are used to capture the protest. Similarly different angles and techniques are used to cover the Karachi and Lahore protests of PTI in order to keep the excitement of footages alive. The video of the news about printing extra ballot papers shows close-ups of vote casting hands, ballot papers and ballot box. Close-ups here signify/emphasize the importance, close surveillance and clarity of the polls process. Extreme close-

up of a Karachi target killer standing behind the bars is taken in which the police cops are touching and playing with his long, bushy moustache. This scene becomes funny and attractive for viewers.

Visuals are important for media viewers as viewers believe more in camera captured reality than pencil-drawn reality. Photographs or videos, by the nature of their technology, suggest a reality that is far stronger than that of drawings, illustrations, and paintings.

Sound Analysis

No media genre is complete without sound. Television news also makes a tremendous use of sound in 24/7 bulletins. Let's examine sound selection in selected channels.

On Express channel, the opening news about bomb-blasts in Quetta and Peshawar is started with specific music that increases thrill, suspense, terror and indicates about challenging situation. The use of such music intensifies the dramatic effect of news and viewers are attracted. News about political situation in country accompanies with its signature tune of the channel. The news of the Bollywood actor Aamir Khan's reaching age of 49 years, is combined with his famous movie song "*Aey meray humsafar, ik zara intizaar* (o my fellow-traveler, wait a little bit)" along with clips from his hit movies.

In headlines news on 25th March, the sweet memories of Cricket World Cup on 25th March 1992 are recalled by airing the specially created world cup song "The world is coming down, the flags are up, who is going to be no. 1, who'll take up the cup".

The news video, in which the drop scene of missing Malaysian airplane has occurred, contains a special music which type of music is commonly used in horror and suspense movies. The missing airplane had gone straight into deep Indian Ocean and drowned, killing hundreds of passengers. This news is accompanied by horrifying music which indicates the terror of death spread over the whole scene.

The weather news is often started with sweet music or songs. In the news video on 24th March, the rain is further made magical by playing alongside, a song of famous vocalist Adnan Sami Khan who sings "*Barish ki rim jhim kuch gaa rahi he, Betaby dil pey meray chhaa rahi he, Khushboo hawa bhi meri laa rahi he, Armanon k sitam dhaa rahi he* (rain is singing and I feel restless, fragrance has spread with air and it wakes up my sleeping desires)".

Special thrilling and alarming music starts the video of hiring Lady traffic wardens in Lahore. As the elegant lady wardens sitting on heavy bikes and inspiring awe (particularly for traffic-rules violators) are shown, thrilling music is turned on along with camera and editing techniques to appeal viewers and warning the young, rash, enthusiastic motorcyclists.

If we look at the Samaa news channel, it also selects fascinating sounds and music to adorn the news items. The news video showing Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah's forgetting his car on the gate of Data Darbaar, starts with Indian song "*Idhar chala me udhar chala, janey kahan me kidhar chala* (I am wandering here and there aimlessly not knowing where to go)" that continues for 5-6 seconds and a sound of bursting bubble is also heard which signifies his confused, forgetful disposition. They also connote inefficiency of Government officials. Audience also likes to see such light and interesting criticism on government ministers.

Thrilling music can be heard at the start of the news about Defence expo in which a Pakistan made POF-5 Eye-gun becomes a centre of attraction for public. To show the impressive qualities of this gun, an exciting music is played in the beginning of the footage.

At Samaa, tailpieces of headlines segment are embellished with light and interesting music and videos. The news of Vietnam's chef baking splendid cakes in Karachi starts with light and sweet music. The next news about an Indian girl showing tricks in a circus also begins with exciting music to attract the viewers towards the news. In the same way, the videos of Islamabad food festival showing various Chinese foods, Lahore handbags show, Soofi musical night in Islamabad and bridal-wear show in Islamabad, present light, sweet music and songs which enhance the attraction of the footages. Lahore Sufi festival's footage also consists of folk music and famous folk song by Saen Zahoor "*okhay panday lambian ni rahwan ishq dian* (the path and journey of True Love is long, tiring and not-ending)". A weather news update starts with the song "*Kis naam se pukaroon kia naam he tumhara* (how should I call you, what is your name)", and beautiful images of flowers, rain and cute faces. The footage of PTI's Karachi protest starts with PTI's promotional song "*Sun lo piaro meray yaro, tabdili aa gaii he yaro* (o my friends hear, a big change has occurred)".

The above analysis shows that different types of music or sounds are played along with news to heighten effects, and as sounds also connote different feelings for example sadness, happiness, liveliness, applaud, hatred, arrogance, power or powerlessness, romance, sensuality, suspense, horror etc. they impart an entertainment touch to the news.

Conclusion

Words, images and sound carry with them potential weight, meanings and value. If they are used at right place with right methods/intentions and at right time, they can work wonders. The news writers are not only aware of this fact, but they are the masters of these three resources. A skilful use of language and semiotic resources is done to make television news appealing for viewers. News producers try not to distract their audience and maintain the appeal of news as entertaining commodities. It must also be understood that as news has been commercialized and facing severe competition from other digital media, so news agencies felt compelled to add more entertaining colors to the news to maintain their important position in the hearts of audience. Devereux (2003:64) says 'there is now a greater concentration on entertainment and infotainment within media content. Entertainment sells'.

Infotainment, though is serving the financial purpose of news producers but obviously it will have both positive and negative implications for common public. Positive is that it pleases people, reduces distance between the producers and consumers, develops friendly feeling but the possible negative is that those aspects/issues which should be taken seriously may get ignored or taken for granted, and consequently impact the public. Therefore, it seems important that producers and consumers must be conscientious when producing or consuming news texts/programs.

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