Linguistic Accommodation in the Media

Rajnović, Irina

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2015

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:186:254060

Rights / Prava: In copyright/Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-03-14**

UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Irina Rajnović

LINGUISTIC ACCOMMODATION IN THE MEDIA

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the M.A. in English Language and
Literature and Computer Science at the University of Rijeka

Supervisor:
Dr Branka Drljača Margić

Rijeka, September 2015

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Branka Drljača Margić for her guidance during writing this thesis, and for getting me acquainted with the world of Sociolinguistics. I would also like to thank the staff of the National and University Library in Zagreb for assisting me with the selection of literature.

Finally, I am very grateful to my family and friends for the encouragement and constant support.

Abstract

The thesis discusses the issue of accommodation theory and language and the media. To be more specific, the thesis discusses how the two are interconnected. It deals with the concept of communication accommodation theory in general – assumptions, background, strengths and weaknesses, convergence and divergence, and how communication accommodation theory actually works in real life. Afterwards, the thesis describes language and the media – history of language and the media, register and style, differences between different types of communication, and two possible directions in which media language may evolve.

Following the previous research concerning accommodation in the media, the present study deals with the attitudes towards (accommodative) language used in the media. The results of the study are statistically analysed and discussed. Finally, some concluding remarks are offered.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

In almost every conversation people accommodate to each other. The present study explores linguistic accommodation in the media.

The first section deals with the concept of communication accommodation theory. It is explained what communication accommodation theory is and on what assumptions it is based. First assumption deals with the behaviour during interaction - there are similarities and disimilarities that exist in every conversation. Next, people's perception of speech and behaviour of other interlocutors determines a possible conversational outcome – will it be positively or negatively evaluated. Also, language and behaviour seem to be the most important factors when indicating social status and group belonging. Finally, communication accommodation theory is guided by norms.

Communication accommodation theory lays its fundamentals in two great theories – speech accommodation theory, and social psychology and social identity theory. The latter describes possible reasons for the neccesity of accommodation – similarity attraction, social exchange process, casual atribution process, and intergroup distinctiveness. What all of these theories have in common are the processes of convergence ("positive accommodation") and divergence ("negative accommodation"). It is also possible to overaccommodate; however, the outcome of overaccommodation may not be positively evaluated. There are several components of which communication accommodation consists – sociohistorical context, accommodation orientation, immediate situation, and evaluation and future intentions. However, there are two sides to every story, hence, communication accommodation theory has both its strengths and weaknesses, which can also be seen when the theory is applied in various case studies, such as the ones among diverse cultural groups.

The thesis also deals with the issue of language and the media. It is refered to as an *issue* because there are disagreements about what language in the media should be like. The question posed here is also whether *language* and the *media* should be viewed separately or together – *media language* – and how this language influences (if it does) the audience.

First, we take a closer look at the development of language and the media through history – from press to the Internet. It is important to understand what influenced the changes in the language and how these changes affect a certain medium. With the development of the media, the classification of the media also changed during time. After identifying the

differences in the definitions of register and style, it is described how the style of the language shifts depending on the target audience as well as the medium. Register and style also differ when comparing face-to-face communication and mediated communication. Based on previous and contemporary knowledge and conclusions, future predicitions are made.

Many case studies (Christopherson, 2011, Jones et al., 2006, Bell, 1991, etc.) confirm that accommodation theory can be applied in language and the media. The authors made their own predictions and did research. The present study involved 41 particpants (both male and female) using an online questionnaire. Section 5 provides the analysis of results. In section 6 the results are discussed, and, finally, some concluding remarks are offered.

2. Communication accommodation theory

When surrounded with different people, we change the style of our speech. This sudden change depends on many variables such as the person we are interacting with and the setting where the interaction takes place, the topic of conversation, the purpose of interaction, and so on. In other words, we "adjust our communicational behaviour to the requisite roles that participants are assigned in a given context" (Thanasoulas, 1999)[1].

2.1. What is it?

Communication accommodation theory is a theory of communication developed by Howard Giles. Its main point of argument is that people during discourse, in order to accommodate others, accustom their speech, vocal patterns as well as their gestures (Turner and West, 2010). Communication accommodation theory is trying to answer the question why people either overrate or underrate the social differences between themselves and the people they are talking to (interlocutors) through verbal and nonverbal communication. The theory explores various reasons in order to answer this question. It is mostly concered with the connection between "identity, context and language" (Gallois, Ogay and Giles, 2005: 128).

Communication accommodation theory focuses on factors, both interpersonal and intergroup, that lead to accommodation. Also, it focuses on the ways in which power and context affect communication behaviour. Communication accommodation theory describes two main processes – convergence and divergence. The first accommodation process, convergence, refers to the strategies that help reduce social differences when people adapt their communicative behaviours to each other's. The second accommodation process, divergence, refers to the time when people emphasize the speech and nonverbal differences between themselves and the persons they are talking to. I shall elaborate on both processes later on. Now we will briefly discuss the background of communication accommodation theory.

---

[1] Retrieved from http://www.tefl.net/esl-articles/accommodation.htm (20.7.2015.)

2.2. Assumptions

Communication accommodation theory is guided by four assumptions. These assumptions developed under the influence of social pyschology and, especially, social identity theory (described below). The assumptions are the following:

1. In all conversations exist speech and behavioral similarities and disimilarities.
2. It is how people perceive the speech and behaviour of other people that determines the evaluation of the discourse.
3. Language and behaviour serve as indicators of social status and group belonging.
4. The accommodation process varies in degree and appropriateness, and is guided by norms.

Each of the four assumptions will be explained further on.

First assumption: When people engage in conversation, they do not talk about the here and the now, but they also involve their past experience. It is all about the social-historical context in which the communication is involved (Giles and Ogay, 2007). People's willingness to accommodate to a certain extent depends on people's attitudes and beliefs. Naturally, the more people are similar, the greater the extent of accommodation.

Second assumption: Here, it is all about the perception and evaluation of a single conversation. The process of interpreting a message is called perception, while the process of judging a conversation is called evaluation (Turner and West, 2010). It is like when a person engages in a conversation and then, depending on the topic, decides whether he or she needs to make adjustments in order to fit in. However, there is not always time to make adjustments. For instance, a person meets a tourist and they exchange only a few words about directions to the nearest restarurant. Here, there is no need to make adjustments since the two persons will probably never meet again.

Third assumption: This assumption illustrates the importance of language and behaviour. Language and behaviour are indicators of social status and group belongings. In other words, if a French speaking person is talking to a Spanish speaking person, the language of communication will be the one of the higher social status person. Giles an Ogay (2007) dubbed this idea as salient social membership. Another example is the following. Let's say a person gets pulled over by a police officer. The person will probably make as many as speech accomodations a possible in order to avoid getting a ticket.

Fourth assumption: This last assumption focuses on what is socially appropriate and what is dictated by norms. Norms are defined here as anticipations of behaviours that individuals feel should or should not arise in communication (Turner and West, 2010). These norms help people decide what is the appropriate way to accommodate. Consequently, the socially appropriate accommodation is the one made according to those norms. A good example is when a young person speaks to an older one and does not use *slang* in order to show respect.

2.3. Communication accommodation theory development

Communication accommodation theory can be traced back do Howard Giles's accent mobility model of 1973 (Turner and West, 2010). However, there are two main theories that led to the development of communication accommodation theory – speech accommodation theory, and social psychology and social identity theory.

2.3.1. Speech accommodation theory

The speech accommodation theory's goal was to demonstrate what is the value of social pshychological concepts when it comes to understanding the dynamics of speech (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991). It tried to explain what motivated people to shift speech style during discourse and some of the social consequences which evolved from these shifts (Gallois, Ogay and Giles, 2005). Speech accommodation theory focused on the cognitive and on the affective processes which are the fundamentals of people's convergence and divergence through speech. In order to broaden this theory it had to include speech, nonverbal aspects, and social interaction's discursive dimensions (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991). The span was now enriched with other aspects of communication and the communication accommodation theory has the potential to become more interdisciplinary (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991) than its predecessor (speech accommodation theory).

2.3.2. Social psychology and social identity theory

Communication accommodation theory, as well as speech accommodation theory, originates from social psychology. To be more specific, it draws from four main socio-pschychology theories. These are the following: similarity-attraction, social exchange, causal attribution and intergroup distincitveness. These theories serve as help in explaining why people *accommodate* their language and behaviour to the speakers. Each of the four theories will be explained later on. Another theory in which communication accommodation theory

relies is social identity theory. The social identity theory points out that a person perceives oneself as having two identities – a personal identity and a social identity. The latter one is based on in-groups' (groups to which they belong) and out-groups' (groups to which they do not belong) comparisons people make (Turner and West, 2010). Social identity theory also argues that people try to keep a positive social identity. They do so by joining groups where they feel pleasant or by getting the best out of the group to which they already belong. As speech has always been used as a means of expressing group membership, people have also used it to mark distinctiveness from other social groups. They did so by adopting the speech style of their own group. As Gallois, Ogay and Giles (2005) put it, people do so in order to mark a prominent group distinctiveness, so as to strengthen a social identity.

Similarity-attraction

As the name says, this theory's view is that people are more attracted to those people with whom they share mutual attitudes and beliefs. In other words, with the increase of similar attitudes and beliefs to those of others, also grows the likeliness of attraction (Giles and Smith, 1979). From this it can be seen that one of the reasons why people use convergence is to get a social approval from their interlocutors. In other words, the greater desire of social approval, the greater the tendency to converge (Giles and Smith, 1979). That being said, we can conclude that people with higher tendency for social approval converge more than people with lower tendency. The interlocutor on the receiving end is, so to say, more flattered by the other speaker's high accommodation than by the low or no accommodation at all.

Social exchange process

As Giles and St. Clair (1979) put it, the social exchange process theory states that, before taking any action, people try to evaluate the stake and costs of different courses of that action. In other words, before engaging in interaction and accommodating, people calculate how to get more at less cost. Depending on the calculation, people decide what their next step will be. It all comes down to one question: "What do I get from this if I accommodate to my interlocutor's speech?" Most of the time, convergence brings rewards; however, sometimes it can bring too little rewards (or no reward), too much effort and costs, and a sense of personal identity loss. In other words, people get a sense that they put too much of themselves into the conversation without getting much out of it. This is why people tend to assess the costs and rewards before choosing to use convergence.

Casual attribution process

This theory suggests that people "interpret other people's behaviour, and evaluate the individual themselves, in terms of the motivations and intentions that we attribute as the cause of their behaviour" (Giles and St. Clair, 1979: 51). This means that people can view convergence either as a positive behaviour or as a negative behaviour, depending on the causes people attribute to convergence. For instance, Giles and Smith conducted an experiment among French and English speaking Canadians: "When French Canadian listeners attributed an English Canadian's convergence to French in order to break down cultural barriers, the shift was viewed positively. However, when the same behaviour was attributed to pressures in the situation forcing the other to converge, positive feelings were not strongly evoked" (Giles and St. Clair, 1979: 57).

Intergroup distinctiveness

Everyone of us has a certain group of people, a *gang,* a *clique,* with whom they usually *hang out.* What makes that group different from the others are mutual interests. But also, it is the language of the group that is different. And this is what intergroup distinctiveness is about − differences. Members of different groups usually compare themselves on some scale and by some factors that are important to them, for example, personal attributes or material possesions. During these social comparisons between groups, members try to find ways to improve themselves, i.e. to improve their social identity by making themselves positively noticeable from the out-group (Giles and Smith, 1979). Language and style of speech are very important here due to the fact that they define social groups. Members use divergence in speech style in order to be different from the out-group as well as to maintain distinctiveness inside the group. Basically, people just want to feel like they belong somewhere. Thus, distinctive language is used to make clear to which group they belong.

2.4. Covergence, overaccommodation, and divergence

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, communication accommodation theory describes two main processes – convergence and divergence. Overaccommodation is also possible.

2.4.1. Convergence

Convergence is a process where a person shifts their interaction speech patterns in order for them to resemble to the speech patterns of his/her interlocutors. This shift change can be noticed through various features of communication – language use, pronunciation, pause lengths, nonverbal behaviours. It is important to say that these features do not have to undergo the process of convergence at the same time. Convergence in conversation is used based on people's perceptions of their interlocutors – what they are like, what their background is, and other features along those lines. One of the things that triggers convergence is attraction – if conversationalists are attracted to others, the convergence in their conversations will most likely appear (Turner and West, 2010). As the similarity-attraction theory states, people are more attracted to each other when they share similar beliefs, behaviours, personality. Hence, when a person perceives convergence in a positive way, it is very likely that both the conversation and the speaker-interlocutor attraction will be enhanced. It can, then, be said that convergence is about a person's aspiration for social confirmation (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991) from his/her interlocutor. As the person's need for approval grows, also grows his/her likeliness of convergence. However, attraction is not the only factor that increases the need to converge. Other factors are: contingency of future interactions, the interlocutor's social status, and interpersonal variability for need of social consent (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991); comparative history, social norms, and power variables (Turner and West, 2010). As previously mentioned, it is more likely that the person with a lower social status will converge to the person of a higher social status, than the other way around.

Convergence is a very good way of increasing the efficiency of communication, lowering uncertainity and interpersonal anxiety, and increasing mutual understanding which also is a motive for people to converge.

2.4.2. Overaccommodation

People usually mean well and have good intentions while accommodating to others. However, some people do not recognise these intentions. Instead, these people perceive the convergence as something that is demeaning and patronizing. Overaccommodation can, thus, draw away from the processes of interaction (Turner and West, 2010) just as it can enhance conversation. There are three forms of overaccommodation (Turner and West, 2010): (1) sensory overacommodation, (2) dependency overaccommodation, and (3) intergroup overaccommodation. Sensory overaccommodation takes place when someone overdoes the accommodation to a person's linguistic or physical disability. Consequently, the person then perceives the accommodation as patronizing. Dependency overaccommodation happens when two people engage in a conversation but the person who is speaking places the interlocutor in a lower-status role. The speaker does so because he/she wants his/her interlocutor to feel dependent on the speaker. Intergroup overaccommodation is about treating people on the basis of a general stereotype and not on the basis of being an individual. People link certain forms, frames to certain people and, hence, overaccommodate.

2.4.3. Divergence

This type of accommodation takes place in speech communities where members emphasize the linguistic differences between the speaker and the interlocutor (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991). Members of speech communities (groups) want to positively highlight the distinctiveness of their group. Divergence happens at the time when a person perceives interaction rather as an intergroup process than as an indvidiual's one. Divergence is also a very important factor when it comes to displaying distinctive features of one group from another. It is a helpful tool for keeping a positive image of a person's group, and for strengthening that person's social identity. As Turner and West (2010) put it: divergence might be a way for members of distinctive groups to preserve their cultural identity, a method to compare self images when the other person is treated as a member of an unacceptable group, and a way to signify power or status differences.

2.5. Components of communication accommodation theory

Over the years, communication accommodation theory had been studied more and more. For instance, research conducted by Gallois et al. in 1995 helped in expanding the theory with seventeen new prepositions that influence the processes of convergence and divergence. To be followed more easily, the prepositions are categorized in four main components (Gudykunst, 2003): (1) the sociohistorical component, (2) the communicators' accommodative orientation, (3) the immediate situation, and (4) evaluation and future intentions. Each of the components are expanded below.

2.5.1. Sociohistorical context

This component deals with the way how past interactive experience between in-groups, i.e. groups to which the speaker belongs, interfere, or better yet, influence the communication and the behaviour of interlocutors. The sociohistorical component includes the relations that the groups in contact share, and the social norms that dictate that contact (Gudykunst, 2003). These relations are factors that influence the communicators' behaviour: political or historical relations between two or more nations, different ideological or religious views that two communicating groups hold, and so on.

2.5.2. Accommodative orientation

This component is about the inclinations to distinguish "contacts with out-group members in interpersonal terms, intergroup terms, or a combination of the previous two" (Gudykunst, 2003: 173). Gudykunst also points out the three factors that are very important for accommodative orientation. These are: (1) intrapersonal factors, (2) intergroup factors, and (3) initial orientations. While an intrapersonal factor can be, for instance, personality of the speaker, intergroup factors refer to, for example, the communicators' feelings or attitudes towards out-groups. There are also initial orientations that occur when a speaker, for instance, perceives a contact as a potential for conflict. However, as Griffin (2008) points out, there are certain issues that influence the initial orientations factor - distressing history of interaction, stereotypes, norms for treatment of groups, high group solidarity and high group dependence.

2.5.3. Immediate situation

The component immediate situation is about the actual moment when communication takes place. Gudykunst (2003) shaped this component into five aspects: (1) sociopsychological states, (2) goals and addressee focus, such as motivation and goal, (3) sociolinguistic strategies, such as convergence or divergence, (4) behaviour and tactics, such as accent, topic, and (5) labeling and distribution.

2.5.4. Evaluation and future intentions

Evaluation and future intentions refers to communicators' perception of their interlocutors' behaviour and the effects on future encounters between two groups. The conversations that will be positively rated are the ones that lead to further communication between members of different groups.

2.6. Strengths of communication accommodation theory

Different authors have different opinions about the communication accommodation theory. For instance, one of the primary focuses of communication accommodation theory is different roles of conversations in people's lives. The theory's greatest strength is that it can be applied in various fields, both personal and professional - family relationships (Fox, 1999), communication with older people (Harwood, 2002), in the workplace (McCroskey and Richmond, 2000), and in the mass media (Bell, 1991). The theory is is still developing and is still masively supported by research from various authors. What supports the simplicity of the theory is the fact that the processes of convergence and divergence make communication accommodation theory easy to understand.

2.7. Weaknesses of communication accommodation theory

Communication accommodation theory also has its weaknesses. Criticism towards the theory has been particulary expressed by three scholars – Judee Burgon, Leesa Dillman, and Lesa Stern. Their comments are mostly about the convergence – divergence system. They posed questions such as: "What happens if the processes of convergence and divergence in conversations happen at the same time? Who suffers the consequences - the speaker or the listener, or both?" The scholars hold that conversation between people is too complex to be explained by the processes of communication accommodation theory. The theory relies too

much on the rational way of communicating and, thus, causes conflicts because people do not always have a rational way of thinking.

2.8. Application of accommodation theory in communication between diverse cultural groups

2.8.1. Intergenerational communication

Accommodation theory has always been interesting to researchers into communication between the young and the elderly. Popular sociolingustic studies hold that age is a variable only to the range that it may show forms of dialectal variation within speech societies across time (Giles and Ogay, 2007). However, other important differences between generations, such as beliefs about talk, various language devices, interactional goals, situational perceptions (Coupland, Coupland, and Giles, 1988), should be taken into consideration as well when exploring problems in intergenerational communication and improving effectiveness. Models such as the "communication predicament model of ageing", and the "communication enhancement model of ageing" (Ryan et al., 1995: 98) have been developed in order to accentuate numerous consequences that have been drifted by attitudes towards aging, positive and negative.

Young-to-elderly language strategies

The young tend to have stereotypes about the old. Conversation between a younger person and an older person is not usually very smooth. This discourse is negatively evaluated by either the young speaker, or by the elder speaker (Hummert, 1990). The result of this attitude is a reduction of any meaningful communication. To illustrate this Ryan et al. (1986) in their research developed a typology of four young-to-elderly language strategies. The research deals with the problem of the elderly being vulnerable to the social and psychological circumstances of isolation, neglect, and negative stereotyping. However, it is not always the problem of the young being rude and incosiderate; sometimes both generations can be responsible for lack of meaningful communication and lack of accommodation.

The first strategy is *overaccommodation* and it happens because of some physical or sensory handicaps. In other words, the occurence of overaccommodation is likely to happen when a speaker communicates with a handicapped person (most of the time this is a person with hearing impairment) and adapt their speech more than needed.

The second strategy goes under the name *dependency-related overaccommodation*, and it refers to excessively directive speech to the elderly. It is called *dependency* because in this type of conversation, the younger person controls the releationship with the elderly person and, thus, induces the older person to become dependent on the younger (Coupland et al., 1988).

The third strategy, *age-related divergence*, proposes a view that a group of young spekares behaves differently on purpose in order to make themselves appear more distinctive than a group of elderly speakers. For instance, a group of older people tend to walk slower, they can't think as fast as they used to, and they cannot keep up with the newest *trends*. Unlike the elderly, the young walk fast, use *slang* and colloquialisms, follow *trends* only to differentiate themselves from the elderly.

The fourth strategy, named *intergroup overaccommodation*, is the most pervasive of young-to-elderly language strategies. As Coupland et al. (1988) stated, to perceive the addressee as *old* and dependent is all it takes for young people to arise negative psychological, physical, and social inferences.

Communication between old and young people in various relationships

Giles (1979) conducted research where he studied the interaction of young and elderly people in business settings. His aim was to investigate communication accommodation in business setting. The results of the research showed that elderly people less accommodate to others than the young.

Another example is studying the ageism phenomenon in the health care context (Nussbaum et al., 2005). Miscommunication between health care staff and patients can occur due to certain factors such as stereotypes related to the patient's age (Nussbaum, Pecchioni and Crowell, 2001).

Application of accommodation theory within intercultural communications

Accommodation theory applies to both inter-group and interpersonal communication. In intercultural communication the theory has been most applied, for better explanation and analysis of behaviours in a variety of situations. These situations include communication between non-native and native speakers during second language acquisition processes, and communication between inter-ethnic groups.

There have also been studies (e.g. Domyei and Csizer, 2005) that compared communication accommodation between tourists and local citizens. In Third World countries, for example, tourists are usually not familiar with the local language – they do not express desire of knowing the local language and accommodating to the locals, nor is that expected of them. It is not expected of tourists to accommodate their own language to the language and style of the locals because, in most cases, the country's economy depends on tourism. Hence, the locals accommodate their speech to that of tourists.

2.9. Communication accommodation theory in action

According to Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991), there is a strong need for a more subjective perspective in order to acquire more clarifying and more diverse explanations of behaviours. This perspective was later called *the applied perspective* and it had to present accommodation theory, not as a theoretical construct, but as a vital part of everyday activity. The authors' main goal was to display how the basic concepts and connections invoked by accommodation theory are accessible for addressing altogether pragmatic concerns, which varied in nature (Giles, Coupland and Coupland, 1991). To explain the term *pragmatic concerns*, a few examples are listed below.

These pragmatic concerns include clinical and medical fields within which it is important to understand the relational issues such as alternative solutions, complications, and results. Relational issues are an important factor in communicating with patients – if the patients are satisfied with the medical interaction, they will agree on implementing the agreed medical treatment.

Another example is the courtroom. Both the plaintiff and the defender choose words carefully, i.e. accommodate themselves to the jury in order to control the outcome of the case.

When it comes to employment, it is believed that the accommodation theory has an influence on the productivity of employees. In other words, an employee is more satisfied with their job if they experience convergence with the co-workers and within the work environment in general.

When learning a second language, accommodation theory can also be practically applied in the sense that a student's education and proficiency in that second language was assisted by accommodative measures.

Language switching is also a situation where accommodation theory plays a role. Language switching occurs when bilingual speakers have to decide which language to speak when surrounded with other bilingual speakers. This choice can be of extreme importance, especially in a business setting. If a bilingual makes an incorrect judgement, this could create negative reactions.

One of the areas where accommodation theory also has practical application, as Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) state, are the lives of people with disabilities. Accommodation in this situation can develop in two ways. Firstly, accommodation theory can help them in fulfilling all of their communicative and life potentials or, secondly, it can interfere with reaching their full potential because of focusing on the disabilities that made them different from others instead of focusing on other characteristics that brings them closer to others.

Communication accommodation theory is also applicable in the media. Broadcasters tend to use a specific language style with the purpose of accommodating to the audience. The rating of a particular show depends on the role of the broadcaster – if the language he/she uses helps the show to make progress, then he/she is doing a good job in accommodating to the audience.

.

3. Language and the media

There are different ways of looking at language and the media. One way of looking at language is *collected data* (Durant and Lambrou, 2010). There is a specific set of words (idioms, sentence structures, styles), either written or spoken, to be discussed and set in context. For example, discourse from Internet chatrooms, recordings of people talking on TV, newsletters. It can all be printed and/or recorded in order to study and examine the verbal evidence.   However, such activity may lead into a bit abstract perception – use of language in different media may show repeating features and, also, raise common questions across different media channels. One of the examples is finding regularities in how persuasive effects are achieved in different media formats; for instance, presenting reality in news and documentaries. Similar problems might be found in different sorts of potentially offensive material, or in creating fake online identities. Patterns such as these are subject to further comparison of media discourse across the media.

Media language, on the other hand, may be viewed as a special kind of *system* (Durant and Lambrou, 2010) – a structure of text, images, sound effects and music governed by convention rules. Because of this perception, people tend to differ a *language of television,* a *language of film, music as a language.* The debate currently going on is the one about whether there is "a single, overall semiotic or language of multimodal discourse" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 3), such as web pages and similar online content.

Even though there are many different understandings of *media language,* all of them are connected. Whether it is language used in certain emails, in a TV programme, or on a website, it provides evidence when speculating about questions such as realism, bias, newsworthiness or offensiveness. Based on the evidence gathered from the omnipresent language data, people think of *language of the media* as being some kind of general system. Hence, people need to keep in mind these different dimensions of *language and the media* and, in addition, develop a habit of switching between "the level of precise description and the level of generalisation"(Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 3).

3.1. History of the media and language

The media and language are closely related. Without language, there would be no way to present something in the media. Even if it were pictures, there is still a need for words to describe those pictures. The relation between the media and language is very close – as it was in the past, it is now, as well.

The media is developing in a cumulative way; in other words, almost every medium that developed through history is in use today, as well. The oldest medium is speech. With speech people made literature. Afterwards, the development of writing is in order and, with it, the first writings on the stone or leather, or paper which lead to the development of press.

3.1.1. History of the press

In the time of the Roman Empire, people had the need to write down important events that surrounded them. At first, they used large stones or metal plates which they put on visible places so that everybody could read important notifications. These released notifications were called *Acta Diurna.* Later, when paper had started being used, people rewrote books in order to make copies of those books. They wanted to make the books available to everyone. However, that was a very hard job that did not flow smoothly as it took very much time. In order to make the job more easier, in 1455 the press machine was invented by Johannes Gutenberg. The invention of the press machine enabled printing newspapers.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the first newspapers were published. The first modern newspaper was printed in 1609 in Germany – *Avisa,* while in 1631 *La Gazette* were published in France. In Croatia, the first newspapers started printing in 1771 and were written in Latin – *Zagrebačke novine.* The first newspapers written in Croatian were called *Kraglski Dalmatin.* As the people were not only Croatian, but there were also Italian people living in Dalmatia, these newspapers contained articles written in Italian in order to accommodate to Italian people. Not until 1835 did appear the first newspaper written completely in Croatian – *Novine Horvatzke,* under the editorship of Ljudevit Gaj. The newspaper contained an enclosure *Danica Horvatzka, Slavonska i Dalmatinska* that was intended for people who lived in continental Croatia, in Slavonia and in Dalmatia so they would not feel left out. In other words, *Novine Horvatzke* wanted to have many readers so they accommodated the content to everyone in every part of Croatia. Hence, newspapers became an important part of the Croatian National Revival in the 19th century. Today, there

are many types of newspapers intended for different people. Many of today's newspapers can be found online, as well.

In the end of the 19th century radio and film emerged, only to lead to the development of television, computer and the Internet in the 20th century.

3.1.2. History of radio

Several inventions superceeded the invention of radio. It was thought for a long time that the inventor of radio was Guglielmo Marconi; however, in 1943 it was confirmed that radio was invented by Nikola Tesla. Radio started developing during the 20th century. The first radio station was founded in Iowa, USA in 1907, after which many developed in Europe. The first radio station in Croatia was *Radio Zagreb* which started broadcasting in 1926. The radio station brodcasted news and classical music concerts. Soon, the program was enriched with sports, foreign language courses and radio dramas.

3.1.3. History of television

Willoughby Smith, Paul Gottlieb Nipkow, John Logie Baird are just some of the people who, with their own inventions, contributed to the development of television. The first successful television broadcast apeared in 1910 in the USA. The television broadcasted a concert from the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Of course, the first televisions were black and white. Soon, the first TV companies were established – WNBC in New York and BBC in London. In Croatia, first televisions appear in the year 1956, exactly thirty years after the radio. Even though the first TV company *Televizija Zagreb* was founded in the late 1956, radio remained more popular for some time. *Televizija Zagreb* became (in 1990) the national TV broadcaster named *Hrvatska radiotelevizija*, and many other TV companies started broadcasting.

3.1.4. The Internet

In 1969, the American Ministry of Defense established the Internet as a medium. It was called *ARPANET(The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network).* However, the person who gets most credit for Internet's further development is Tim Berners-Lee – the developer of World Wide Web. The Internet, basically, functions through links that are interwoven and that share a common content. It is a medium that people use to explore

various possibilities that other media cannot give, such as social networks or music channels, like *YouTube*. When online, people can send emails, write online diaries (blogs), read newspapers, and shop. The Internet is designed to accommodate to people and to please their every need while searching for information on different search engines.

3.2. Classification of the media

It is very hard to define the media due to their broadness and differences. If you ask a common person to define the media, the answer would probably be "television, radio, film, internet." When looked up in a dictionary, the word *medium* is defined as following:

- a channel or a system of communication, information or entertainment,
- a material or technical mean of artistic expression.

The broadest classification of the media is that there are two types of media, according to distribution – printed media (e.g. newspapers) and electronic media (television, radio, Internet). However, according to Bognar (2012), there are five types of media:

1. Auditory media – enable recording and reproducing of voice and music; e.g. CD.
2. Visual media – enable visualisation that has great meaning; e.g. pictures, photoghraphs, charts.
3. Textual media – a subgroup of visual media; e.g. textbooks.
4. Audiovisual media – combine both picture and sound; eg. TV, digital camera, smartphone.
5. Personal computers – along with various plug-ins such as scanners, printers, and projectors, PCs enable incorporation of all the media together. With the development of internet, PCs made information widely available.

Every medium has its own powerful language – word of the press, sound of radio, audiovisual language of the film, and sofisticated *computer communicating* of the Internet.

3.3. Register and style

Terms register[2] and style are often used interchangeably. Register, as well as style, describes "patterning in speech and writing" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 7). Register and style also describe shifts people make in order to be sure that the form of language they adopt for a particular context is appropriate. In other words, "we match *how* something is communicated to *what* is being communicated and to *whom*" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 7).
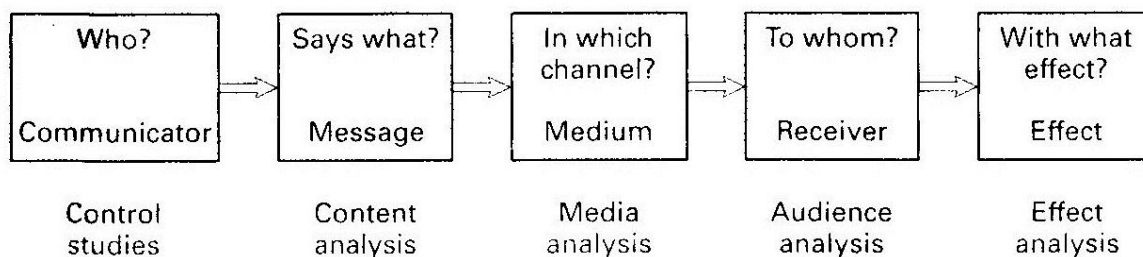
Who? Communicator	Says what? Message	In which channel? Medium	To whom? Receiver	With what effect? Effect
Control studies	Content analysis	Media analysis	Audience analysis	Effect analysis

Figure 1. Laswell's Formula model (1948, as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010)

A good example is degree of formailty – should the discourse be formal or informal, it depends on the function or purpose in a given situation. For instance, just as it would not be appropriate for a high school teacher to start the class with "*Yo! Whaddup, peops?*", it is not expected of fellow classmates to address one another with "*Kind lad, mind you telling me what was for homework?*" In both cases, the choice of language is in conflict with the context and language users.

There are a few differences between register and style. The linguistic term *register* is used when people are faced with variation according to different situations and functions. Register is "a technical term used to describe a variety of language which is disctinctive for a specific context" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 8). It is a combination of choices a speaker makes that creates register – vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and other features of text design. The outcome of this combination of choices is a particular *style,* which is usually and conventionally associated with specific range of uses, e.g. formal, legal, intimate.

---

[2] The term *register*, as a language variety, may be confused with the notion of *genre.* Genre is associated with different types of media discourse, such as those found in gossip magazines or television soaps. Each of these types is identifiable due to form and function associated features.

But, what makes style appropriate*?* There is no direct audience in mass media (radio, television, etc.) discourse. This means that there is no *given situation* other than the obvious, general one – someone watching TV, or listening to the radio. So what style should the communicator choose, then? It is common for the media to create their own, specialised style of address – public, formal, and ceremonial; or informal, personal. Switching and mixture between registers is also possible. Depending on the target audience, different radio stations broadcast different programs. For example, *Prvi program Hrvatskoga radija* and *Otvoreni radio* in Croatia. The first one broadcasts news, political shows, radio dramas and music that is associated with adults, possibly classical music or jazz. As expected, the style used on this radio station is formal. The second radio station's target audience are the young people, probably in their mid-twenties/mid-thirties. The style used here is informal, personal, friendly.

3.3.1. Different styles of media language

Register is a variety of language used for given types of situation. Hence, register can be classified into "linguistic and textual features using Michael Halliday's model" (1978, as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 60). There are three different aspects of communication associated with any context or situation – *field, mode* and *tenor.*

Field

Field is the purpose, or role, for which language is being used, which typically derives from the field in which it is being used (its subject matter) (Halliday, 1978, as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 60). This means that language can be used for a variety of purposes, for instance, to convey information, to express feelings, to pray, to intimidate, etc. Each of these puproses leave a trail on what is said and how it is said. Many activities have developed their own "characteristic registers by drawing on *field-specific* vocaublaries" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 61). In this sense, there are vocabularies used specifically in the legal profession, the scientific community, academic disciplines, religious rituals, and football commentary[3]. All of the mentioned fields use some distinctive terms, particular to that specific field.

Mode

Mode is the medium of communication (Halliday, 1978 as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 61). It could be said that the medium of a text is the substance from which that text is made. The medium of a text can also be the substance through which the text is

---

[3] The list is not definite. In fact, it could be extended indefinitely.

transmitted, or in which it is stored. In terms of register, the most noticeable difference is the one between speech and writing. Speech in the media includes announcements, news-reading, documentary voices, interviews, and chat show and studio discussion. As opposed to spoken forms, writing involves long periods of composition and revision. Writing forms tend to be more formal in contrast to spoken texts which tend to be more provisional in their structure and are less formal. However, when speaking in public, spoken texts may be "carefully prepared in advance and can take on formal characteristics of the written mode" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 61).

Tenor

The social roles for, or adopted by, participants in the communication situation, which determines tone (Halliday, 1978 as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 61). In a text, there are, typically, markers that indicate the relationship between the participants. The relationship can be formal, familiar, polite, personal or impersonal. The tone of a text is very helpful when it comes to indicating the attitude or position adopted by the writer of a text towards the person reading or listening the text. Tenor could also be seen as a wider, interpersonal function of language due to the importance of "the relationship between participants to what and how they communicate" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 61).

Durant and Lambrou (2010) gave an example to clarify field, mode and tenor by bringing the three aspects, in this case of political register, together. They illustrate how one text can be described in terms of Halliday's model:

Field: Political

Mode: Spoken (but probably prepared in advance in writing and, thus, displaying many writing characteristics)

Tenor: Formal, authoritative; with some markers of informality.

3.4. Face-to-face communication vs. mediated communication

Thompson (1995) distinguishes three types of communication – *face-to-face interaction, mediated interaction,* and *mediated quasi-interaction*.

The first form of interaction happens in a, what Thompson calles, *context of co-presence*. This means that the participants are, during this interaction, in each other's immediate presence in the same space and time. This common spatial-temporal reference

system allows the participants to use expressions such as *here, now, this, that* as well as pointing to objects, smiling, frowning. [4] Face-to-face interaction is a two-way flow of information.

The second form of communication, mediated interaction, involves interactions such as letter writing, telephone conversation, and other interactions along those lines. To be more clear, mediated interaction involves using technical media. Unlike face-to-face interaction, mediated interaction does not happen in the same space or time. Consequentally, gestures, winks, frowns and other such cues are narrowed down while other symbolic cues, linked to writing, are emphasized. Using these cues helps interpreting the message.

The third form of interaction is mediated quasi-interaction. This type of communication refers to those social relations which are established through the mass communication media, such as books, radio, TV. It is stretched across space and time which, in turn, results in narrowing down the use of symbolic cues. This interaction has *quasi* in its name because it is not face-to-face communication nor is it mediated communication − it is, however, a blend of the two. There are two key aspects that differ this interaction from both face-to-face interaction and mediated interaction. Mediated quasi-interaction is oriented towards an "indefinite range of potential recipients" (Thompson, 1995: 84). Second, mediated quasi-interaction is not a two-way flow of information and communication − it is monological. This means that it does not have the degree of "reciprocity and interpersonal specificity of other forms of interaction" (Thompson, 1995: 84).

Today, the interaction of social life has gone through some changes. This is due to the rise of tehnology and, consequently, the rise of mediated and quasi interaction.

3.5. Contemporary media language

It is obvious that media discourse takes place in a setting different from the one in which face-to-face communication takes place. *Mediated* communication consists of the face-to-face resources that need special adaptations. If communicative events can be viewed as a scale, we could present two ends of it − at one end the events would be *dyadic communication* (Durant and Lambrou, 2010), i.e. a two-way conversation; while at the other end the events would be *mass communication* (Durant and Lambrou, 2010), i.e. a radio or TV broadcast. Mass

---

[4] "Multiplicity of symbolic cues" (Thompson, 1995: 83)

communication has distinctive characteristics that can be analysed through seven major features (McQuail, 1969):

1. Mass communication cannot function without complex formal organisations.
2. Mass communication aims at large audiences.
3. The content of mass communication is open to all – it is public.
4. There are various kinds of people in large audiences.
5. In mass communication the source of the contact is separated from the target (the people) but is established simultaneously and with a large number of people.
6. Communicators, in other words, people who manage relationships between the audience and the communicator, have a public role for which they are known.
7. Mass communication count on the common interest that the target audience shares, even though the people of that audience never met each other.

Other than the features listed above, there is a range of dimensions contributing to the variability of the media: role-reversibility, co-presence, co-distance, co-temporality, fixation, spontaneity, etc.

What is it that makes media discourse distinctive? There are two general properties that stand out of the features listed above – *reification* of spoken communication, and the different capabilities creating *interactivity* (Durant and Lambrou, 2010). Reification is turning a process into something fixed, such as a product. It serves for transforming spoken interaction into an object of commodity; e.g. turning speech into writing that can later be transformed into printed text. Interactivity, on the other hand, is mostly associated with modern media technologies which need to be, in various degrees, interactive in order to be functional. Interactivity includes turn-taking and, thus, interaction instead of being one-way communication.

Mass communication supported by the media allows people to feel intimate[5] by addressing an unseen, large audience using first-name basis, by talking about personal topics, and, using informal language. Combined forms of reification and interactivity used in mediated communication are changing the media discourse environment. Each combination has developed a style that is now adopted as a part of contemporary media communication.

---

[5] Ong (2002: 134) suggests that "one of the major differences between primary and secondary orality" (primary being face-to-face interaction, and secondary being mass communication) "is that secondary orality has generated a strong group sense."

3.6. Future predictions of language and the media

When thinking and discussing about the future of the media, possible consclusions always suggest two contrasting ways in which the media can evolve.

The first vision is an utopian forecast. It suggests a progressive, evolutionary way in which media discourse can evolve. Utopian visions see prosperity in growing potential and the power that the internet holds as well as the great capabilities that technology, in general, offers. However, the features associated with technological capabilities are "open-ended in their social applications" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 118); thus, it is here where the potential for speculation lies. What makes these visions utopian are the following forms (Durant and Lambrou, 2010):

- thanks to technological capabilities, access to infinite amounts of information is granted,
- one of the social benefits is making social interaction easier and independent from time and space,
- there are no restrictions when it comes to expressing an opinion.

The second vision is the dystopian one. This vision emphasizes the dangers of present possibilities. In other words, dystopian visions warn about the bad sides of technology – people can be replaced by machines, and social interaction is displaced by communication machines. Unlike utopian, dystopian forms overaccentuate the risks and dangers "in verbal communication as presently understood" (Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 118); for instance, the power of propaganda to give people wrong information, or intrusions into the personal life using various kinds of surveilance.

4. Case studies

4.1. Communication accommodation theory and the new media

Jones et al. (2006) explain the accommodation theory as the cognizances and motivations which represent the fundamentals of interactants' communication with context and identity salience. This means that the theory is practicable to the new media settings. As the word *new* implies research in this field is at its early stage, however, interesting case studies have appeared in recent years.

Christopherson (2011) investigated the accommodative preferences librarians might have when they are encountered with cyberlanguage. Cyberlanguage is used by the patron through instant messaging (IM) technology. In order to strengthen patron relations, the use of cyberlanguage in virtual reference services (VRS) conversation has been proposed. The expected result of this is that patrons will most likely return if they have a satisfactory interaction with the librarian who uses cyberlanguage. However, actual results were different – convergence is not supported because patron's use of cyberlanguage does not influence the librarian's use of cyberlanguage. Instead, Christopherson (2011) suggests that future research should analyse the possibility of divergence. Accommodation of communication styles yet happens in other communication circumstances that are computer-mediated.

4.2. O'Keeffe: "Investigating media discourse"

In her studies, Anne O'Keeffe (2006) compares two influential means of communication – *dyadic* or two people having a conversation, and *centre-to-periphery* or mass communication. She sees the two models of communication to differ in one important point. O'Keeffe suggests that media interactions are, basically, conversations heard by others. In other words, many conversations led in public places are overheard by other people. However, this model of *overhearing* is too narrow to be applied to media discourse. It cannot be applied due to the fact that, when a host of a show is speaking to his/her guest, the host knows that their conversation is not just between the two of them but in front of a large audience, i.e. they know they are being overheard. With that in mind, the host and the guest are having a different type of conversation than the one they would have when, for instance, the cameras are off. In other words, they *accommodate* their conversation to the audience. One of these conversations requires inclusion and participation of the audience, while the

other requires exclusion (through coded references) and lack of eye contact (detachment). Although very similar in terms of speech, mass communication and dyadic communication differ in form, function and distribution.

O'Keeffe concludes that, even though the relations that build the structure of communicative events of everyday conversation and media conversation are different, those relations can appear to be the same if we look at media talk as being *natural* and *spontaneous.*

4.3. Goffman: "Forms of talk"

In his studies, Erving Goffman (1981) discusses the structure of communication events. He particulary focuses on radio conversation and develops a communication model which is based on social gatherings, where numerous people are involved in different ways.

In this model Goffman investigates how spekares take turns during conversation and switch roles periodically. They do so because that is the only way they can relate to other people's sayings as well as their own sayings. In turn, other discourse participants assume various roles in relation to the messages they communicate. Participants, each of them, may be addressed directly or they can be positioned as overhearing messages addressed to other people. The findings Goffman gathered during his study are dubbed *participation framework* for communication (Goffman, 1981). Unlike in a conventional model where there are two roles, that of *speaker* and that of *hearer,* in Goffman's framework there is a *participation status* of different roles in communication. Here, statements are not interpreted from the point of view of the hearer. Instead, there are different relations in which people engaged and exposed to a spoken conversation stand. Some of those people are addressed directly, while others are not addressed but are intentional *overhearers* of a conversation, for instance, an audience listening to a dialogue in a play. This means that their *overhearing* was anticipated and planned. The participation status of the overhearer is ratified, which means that the design of the utterance includes the planned attention.

A good example of creating such relations is broadcast media talk. For instance, weather forecasts – they adopt a style where the addressing is aimed directly to the audience. Other formats, such as interviews, integrate staged dialogues between nominated performers within the broadcast. The audience plays a role of overhearers whose members are *ratified participants* (Goffman, 2006). The involvement and presence of ratified participants is, in fact, the main purpose of broadcast. Reception and production of media discourse are connected through a certain relationship called *split contexts.* Whereas one time and place is

involved in production, a different place, possibly even time, can be involved during reception. At the time of broadcast communication no member of the audience is known and identified, even if there is access to generalised audience demographics. The role of the producers is to estimate the likeliness of a particular audience, how that audience wishes to be talked to, and how that audience will respond. The address mode in most media talk is usually based on a sense who the audience might be – what type of people, what these people want to hear and see. This sense sometimes may be stereotypical. As soon as the audience recognises certain aspects of themselves in the approach broadcasters adopt, they let themselves to be *addressed* by general broadcast communication (Goffman, 1981). Media talk adopts an informal style of a *quasi-interaction* in the sense that it establishes social relations through mass communication media.

Goffman argues that the role of the *speaker* in the conventional model is too simple and should occupy several roles of different kind – a *societal* role (e.g. sister, brother, Croatian), a *discourse* role (e.g. student, teacher, lawyer), and a *genre* role (e.g. host of a party, MC of a public event). There are more roles developed as the speech of the speaker is recorded and broadcast. These extra layers are called *production format* of media discourse (Goffman, 1981). The role of the speaker is not fixed; moreover, it can be structured of different constituents that function together. The understanding of this aspect of language and the media can be seen through Goffman's insights into code-switching. *Code-switching* is described as a strategy of the speaker in trying to manage how their statements will be received. Some of the code-switching cues Goffman draws on (based on John Gumperz's work) are: direct or reported speech, selection of the recipient, personal directness or involvement, new and old information, disourse type, etc. These switching cues are shifts between different ways of speaking to the audience and shifts between the speaker and the topic of conversation. Knowing that, Goffman distinguishes three additional speaking roles – the role of *principal,* the role of *author,* and the role of *animator.* The combination of these roles make the notion of the *speaker.*

Along with code-switching, footing and stance are also noticeable in a conversation. A common shift of stance is the one from informal to more formal discussion of an independent topic. When the topic of discussion is the main topic, the speaker may project someone else's viewpoints as his/her own and, thus, may be acting as a spokesperson. It is possible to shift between different speaking roles during conversation. The process engaged in maintaining

and shifting between stances is called *footing.* These shifts of both style and technique are an important factor in the restructure of the social environment.

4.4. Bell: "The language of news media"

In his work, Bell (1991) thoroughly studies the processes that are associated with producing broadcast news and print, and the styles that are the result of such news discourse. Drawing on Goffman's classification, Bell makes a list of different technical and professional roles engaged in the making of news production such as journalist, reporter, and editor. Afterwards, he integrates the list into Goffman's categories of speaking roles – principal, author, and animator. Bell adds the role of an *editor* somewhere between the author and the animator. According to the author, the role of the principal can include two sub-roles in print news media – the role of a commercial propertior, and the role of a news professional.

As for media audiences, Bell views roles "as concentric rings, like the skins of an onion" (Bell, 1991, as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 74), which is illustrated in Figure 2. His categories can be matched to a specific mode of address. Bell questions the role of the audience – are audience members second-person addressees, or are they third-person absentees. In order to clarify this blurred category, Bell adds a new category – *auditor.* The role of the auditor serves as a distinction sign within the category that has target addressees and *eavesdroppers.* In other words, the auditor is an overhearer in mass communication who is graded "from fully expected to highly unexpected attender, rather than two distinct groups" (Bell, 1991: 95).
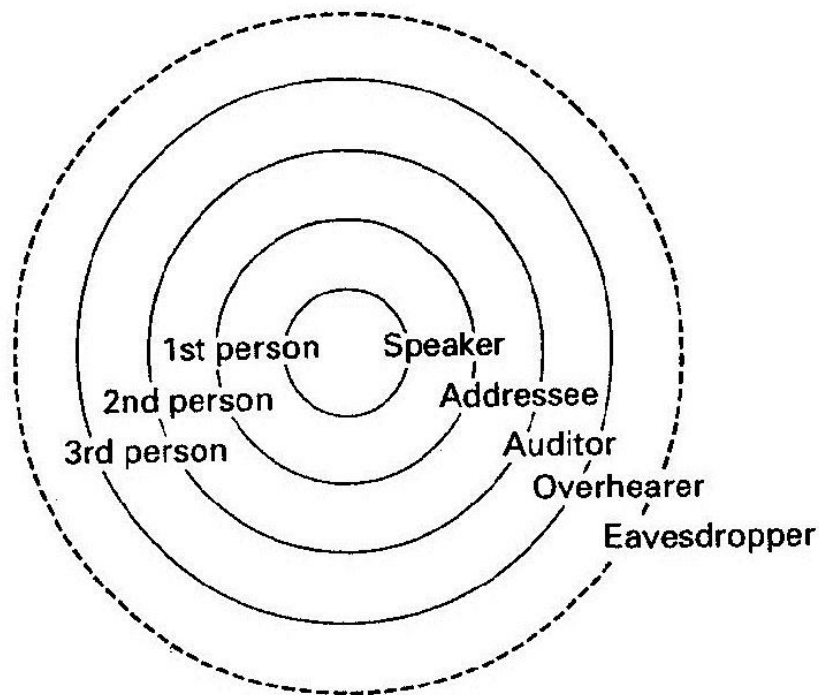
Figure 2. Persons and roles in the speech situation (Bell, 1991 as cited in Durant and Lambrou, 2010: 74)

When people are watching the news, they can sometimes feel empathic. In order for that to happen, the media action or event has to be newsworthy. Bell[6] proposes several features of evaluating newsworthiness:

- the news is bad or just presented in a negative tone,
- the news has just happened,
- the news takes place positionally near the viewer,
- the news is in accordance with viewer's stereotypical view of the world,
- the news is unambiguous,
- the news is unpredictable and rare,
- the news is outstanding,
- the news is possibly pictured in personal terms,
- the news is presented as if it is relevant to the viewer's own personal experience, or audience's own lives,
- the news involves socially prominent actors,

---

[6] Based on the work *Structuring and selecting news* (1973) by Mari Ruge and Johan Galtung.

30

- the news is supported by facts,
- the news is presented by an important figure, by sources who carry authority that are valid.

Not all of the features listed above are necessary to happen all at once. Some of the features just represent a possibility of being presented in a certain way.

5. Present study

5.1. Aims

The aim of the present study is to investigate people's attitudes towards the language that is being used in the media. A related goal is to explore the degree to which the media and media language influence people's perspective on the world.

5.2. Research questions

In order to find out if and how the media influences people and people's perspective on things, it is important to investigate people's opinion on what language should be used in the media, how language differs according to genre, if television hosts should express their opinion or be objective, and how media language has changed over the years..

5.3. Participants

The sample comprised 41 participants, both male (29.3%) and female (70.7%) aged 20 - 35.

5.4. Method of data collection

The data were collected by means of an online questionnaire using the tool *GoogleForms.* The questionnaire was written in Croatian.

The questionnaire comprised two parts – (1) reasons for accommodation of language style, and (2) attitudes towards language and the media. The first part of the questionnaire comprised open-ended questions in order to get various opinions on the language style used in the media and reasons for making accommodations of media language style. The second part comprised twelve statements followed by a scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 being *It doesn't refer to me at all,* 5 being *It completely refers to me*). This part of the questionnaire served to explore general attitudes towards language used in the media.

A pilot study was also conducted, where the participants were encouraged to ask whatever question they had about the questionnaire and to point out the flaws of the questionnaire. Once they had finished, the results were discussed.

5.5. Analysis of results

The results of this study will be presented quantitavely (statistically analysed using *GoogleDocs Forms*), and discussed in the next section.
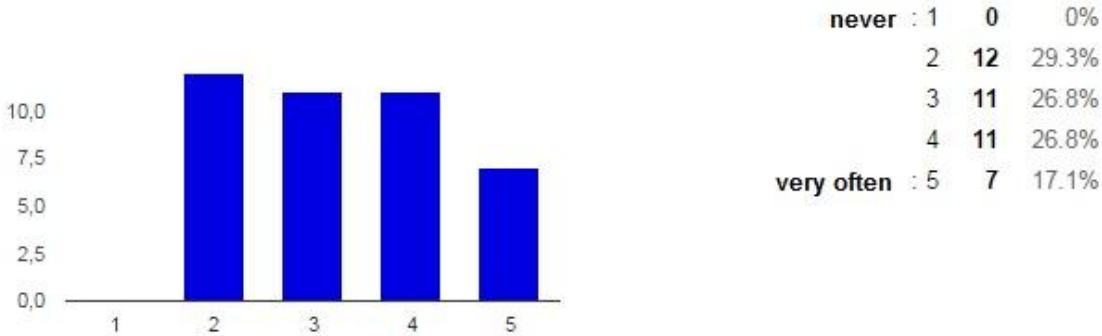

Chart 1. Frequency of watching television

The first question enquired into the frequency of watching television. As it is seen from Chart 1, all of the participants watch television. On the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 stands for *never* and 5 stands for *very often,* the frequency spreads from *rarely* to *often.* The majority of participants mostly watch movies, television shows (sitcoms, sports, documentaries), and the news.

Chart 2 shows that, most of the participants think that television hosts accommodate their language style to the audience.
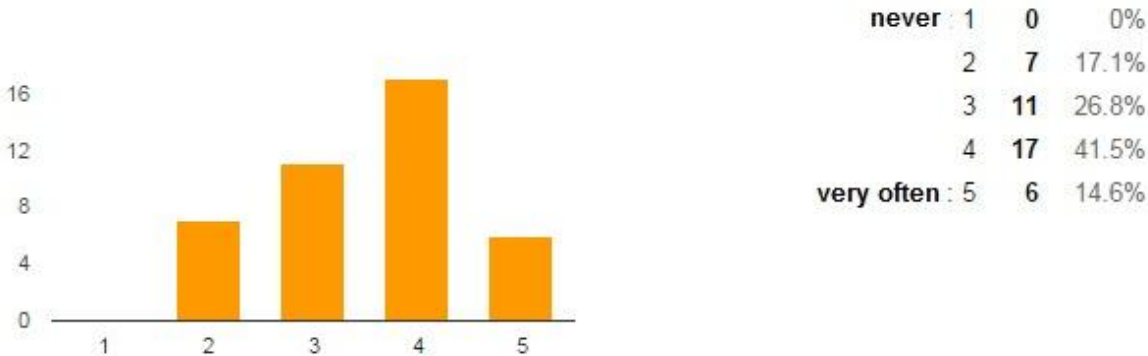

Chart 2. Accommodation of language style

The following open-ended questions investigated the participants' opinions on the reasons why television hosts accommodated their style and where the participants noticed that. The answers related to the latter varied – from kids' shows (not using *big* words and using slang), news (formal style), to talk shows (more informal style). The reasons listed were better viewership, to better present the content, and, most importantly, to get closer to the

audience. When asked to compare the language style in TV shows of different genres, the answers were that in *formal* shows (news, documentaries) formal style was used, while in *informal* shows (music shows, sport programs) informal style was used. Finally, the, participants hold that language in the media should be accommodated to the target audience.

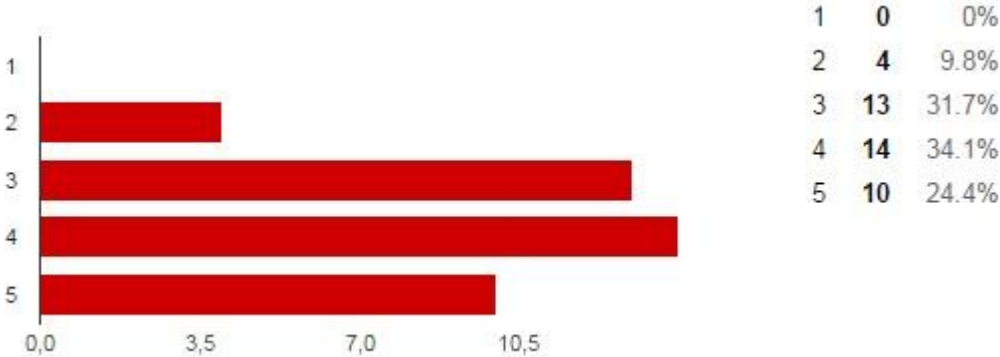The results of the second part of the questionnaire are presented in charts below.

1	0	0%
2	4	9.8%
3	13	31.7%
4	14	34.1%
5	10	24.4%

Chart 3. "I think that media language has changed over the years."

1	1	2.4%
2	5	12.2%
3	17	41.5%
4	11	26.8%
5	7	17.1%
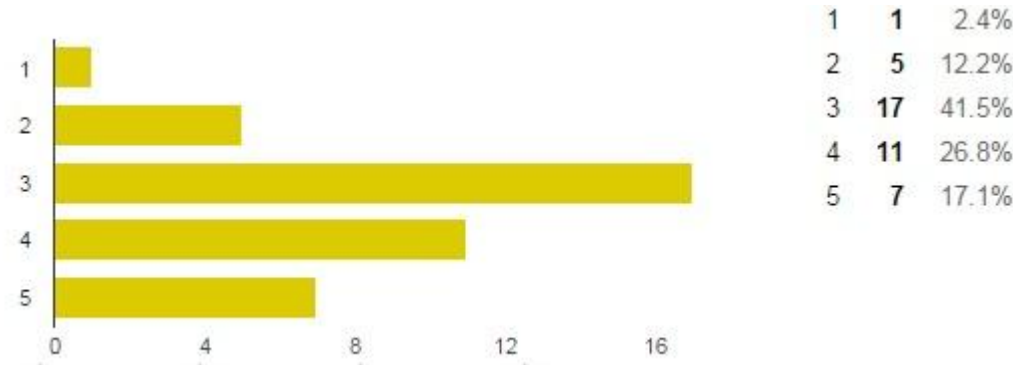
Chart 4. "I think that media language used to be more appropriate."

1	1	2.4%
2	4	9.8%
3	12	29.3%
4	11	26.8%
5	13	31.7%
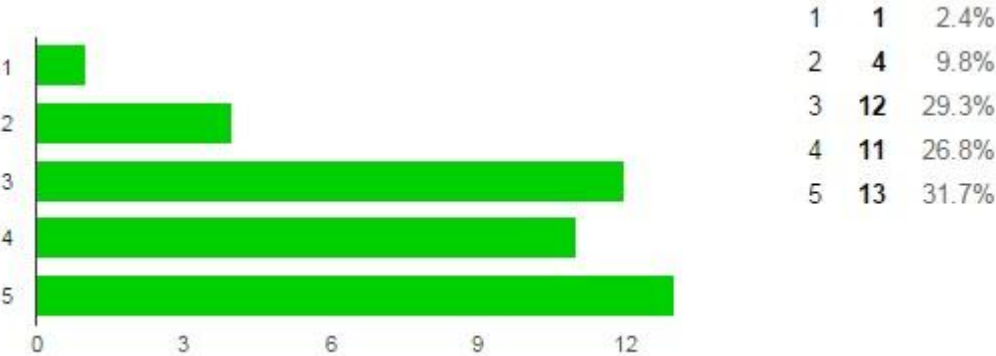
Chart 5. "I think that radio and TV hosts used to employ better expressions."

1	3	7.3%
2	7	17.1%
3	3	7.3%
4	12	29.3%
5	16	39%
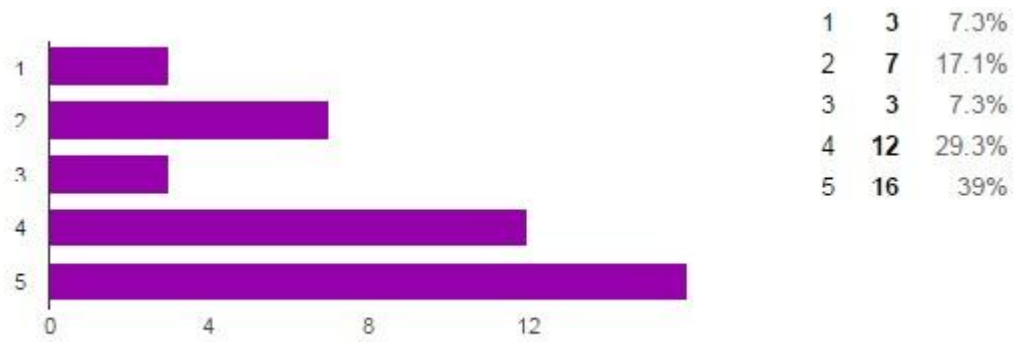
Chart 6. "I think that the standard Croatian language should be used in the media."

1	0	0%
2	12	29.3%
3	9	22%
4	17	41.5%
5	3	7.3%
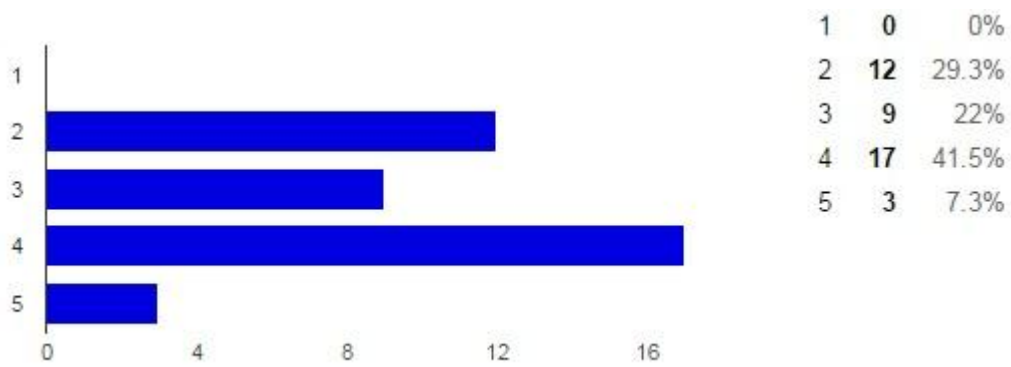
Chart 7. "I think that slang can be used in the media."

1	0	0%
2	4	9.8%
3	7	17.1%
4	14	34.1%
5	16	39%
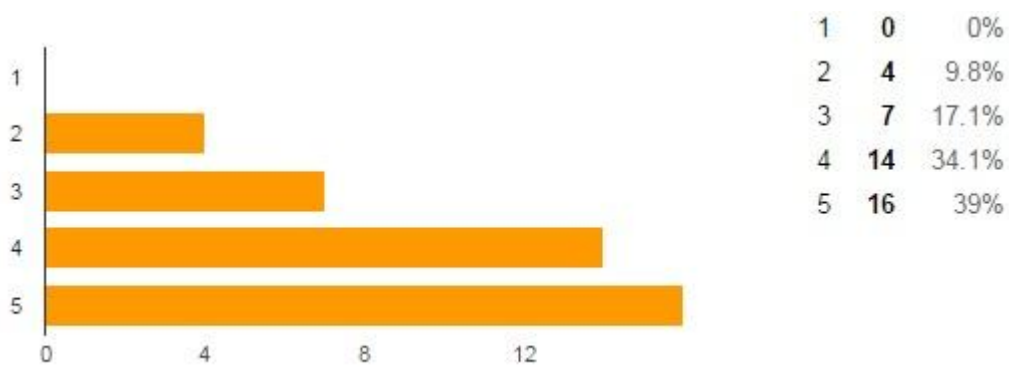
Chart 8. "I think that media language reflects the connection with the audience."

1	3	7.3%
2	5	12.2%
3	12	29.3%
4	11	26.8%
5	10	24.4%

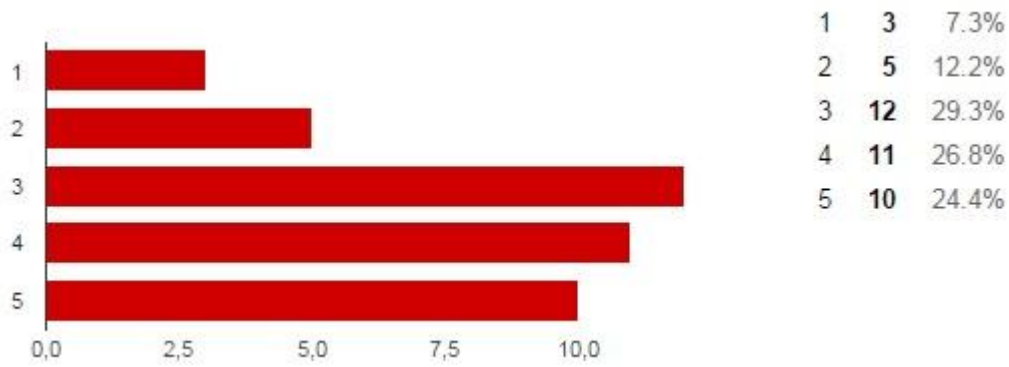*Chart 9.* "I feel connected to the topic of a TV show when the host uses a language style I am familiar with."

1	6	14.6%
2	11	26.8%
3	18	43.9%
4	3	7.3%
5	3	7.3%
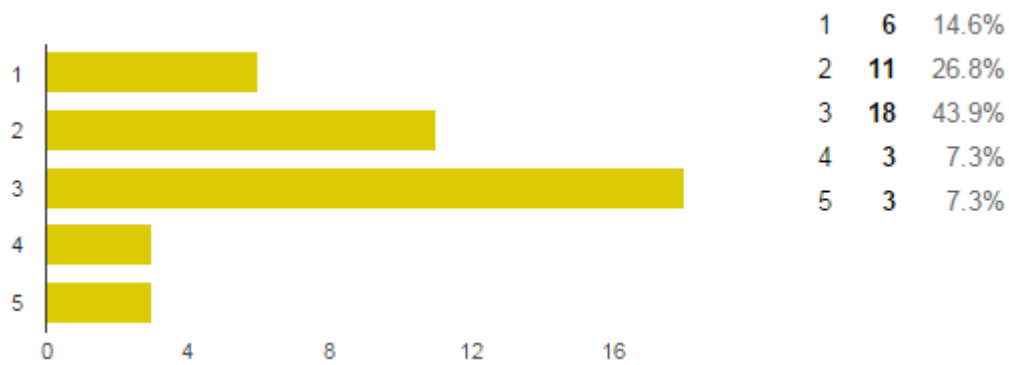
Chart 10. "I find it appropriate for TV hosts to express their personal attitudes."

1	0	0%
2	2	4.9%
3	11	26.8%
4	12	29.3%
5	16	39%
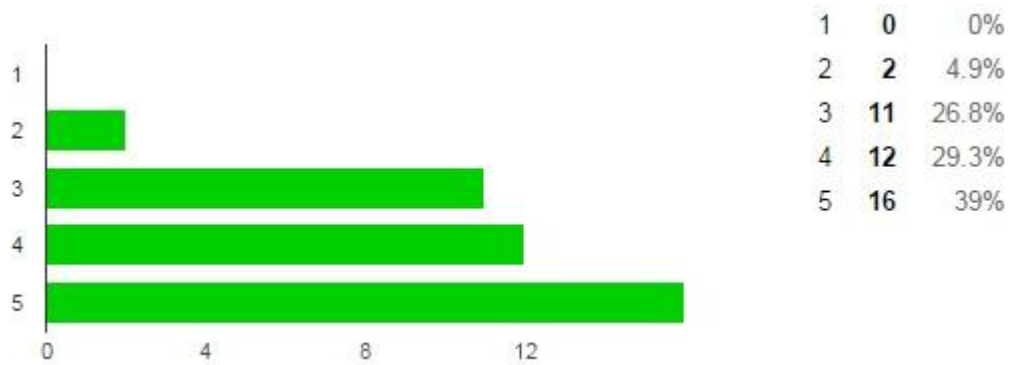
Chart 11. "I hold that media language should be objective no matter what."

1	0	0%
2	2	4.9%
3	11	26.8%
4	21	51.2%
5	7	17.1%
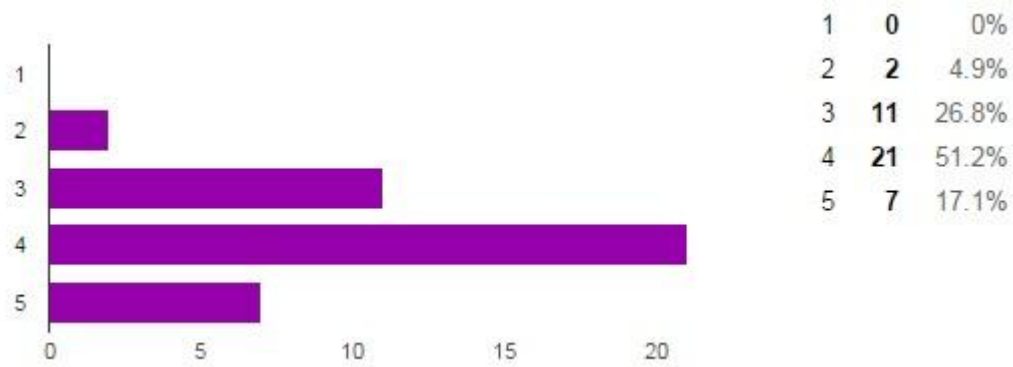
Chart 12. "I believe that media language serves to connect the audience with particular media."

1	1	2.4%
2	0	0%
3	10	24.4%
4	12	29.3%
5	18	43.9%
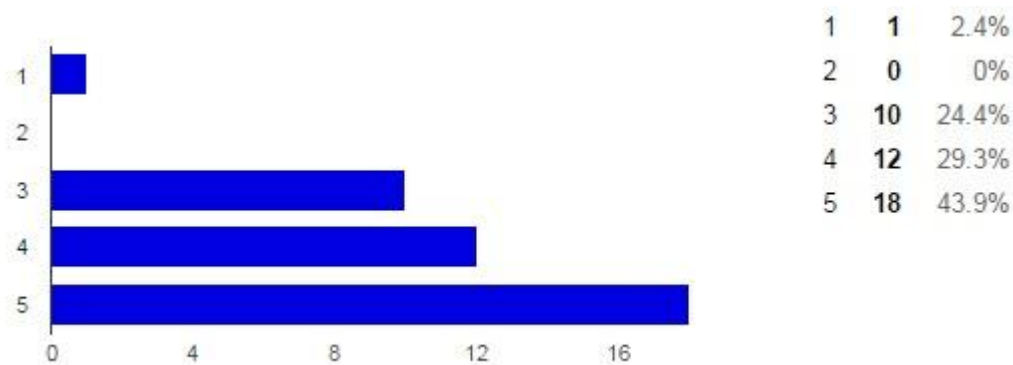
Chart 13. "I think that media language can influence the audience's opinion."

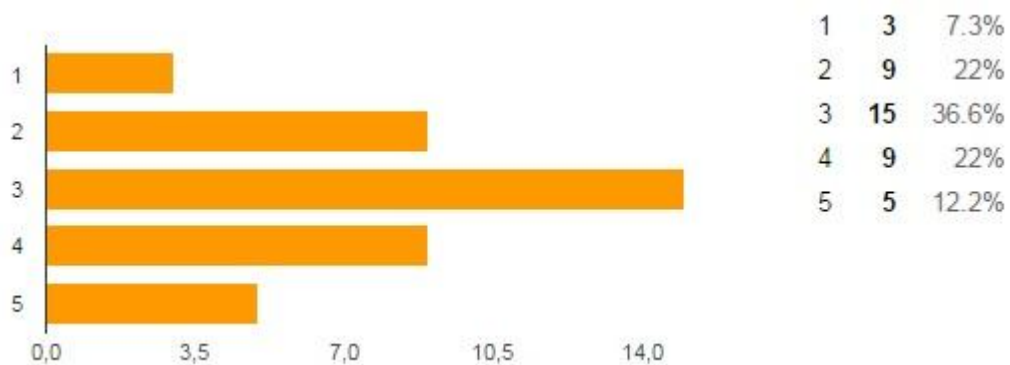| 1 | 3 | 7.3% |
2	9	22%
3	15	36.6%
4	9	22%
5	5	12.2%

Chart 14. "I think that the difference between formal and informal media language style will be barely noticeable in the future."

6. Discussion

The goal of the present study was to explore different attitudes towards the language used in the media. All of the participants watch television, mostly TV shows such as sitcoms, documentary shows, talk shows, and the news. Hence, it was relatively easy for them to notice whether any accommodation takes place.

People widely believe that television hosts accommodate their language style to the audience. For example, the participants noticed the accommodation taking place in television shows for kids, where the tone is informal and *cheerful*, vocabulary simpler, and diminutives often in use. The participants find it appropriate for slang to be used in shows of such genre in order for children to understand the topic of the show. Another example are the news. Bell (1991) lists features which make news seem newsworthy, such as that the news should be supported by facts, and presented as if they were relevant to the personal experience of the viewer. All of the participants agree that news presenters use a very strict, yet acceptable, formal tone and style for presenting the news. It is believed that the news are presented formally in order to be taken seriously.

One of the strategies that television hosts use when accommodating is code-switching (cf. Goffman, 1981) which depends on, among other factors, the selection of the target audience (recipient). The participants agree that televison hosts shift between various ways of addressing the audience, for instance, using slang when speaking to a younger addressee, and using standard Croatian when speaking to an adult.

When participants were asked about the reasons for accommodation the answers were to maximize the viewership and to have a greater audience spectar, to better present the content in order to intrigue the viewers, and to get closer to the target audience. As media language adopts an informal style of quasi-interaction (cf. Goffman, 1981), it is normal for participants to believe that social relations can be established through mass communication media. On the other hand, some of the participants said that the accommodation happens in order to manipulate the audience, which is in accordance with the dystopian prediction that media language will be used as a power of propaganda to give wrong information (cf. Durant and Lambrou, 2010).

Most people hold an opinon that accommodation happens in order to bond with the target audience. In order to get intimate with the target audience, television hosts

accommodate their language style. The media generates a strong group sense (cf. Ong, 2002) by, for instance, talking about personal topics. The participants hold that, by adjusting to the audience in that way, the audience will be more interested in the content of the show. When asked to compare the language used in television shows of different genres, it is widely acceptable for *serious* shows, such as the news (journalistic style) and documentaries (scientific style) to use a formal tone of address, sports program to use sports *jargons*, and entertainment shows, such as music and reality shows, to address the audience in an informal way and use slang expressions. In other words, the participants hold that language style changes from formal to informal depending on the genre of the show.

Also, the participants hold that media language should be unambiguous, clearly understandable, fact supported and truthful, grammatically correct, flexible, topic oriented, and audience oriented.

In the participants' opinion, the language used in the media has changed over the years, and it used to be more acceptable than it is today due to the fact that televison hosts used a more appropriate language style. For instance, one of the participants holds that today's television hosts should look up to their predecessors, such as Helga Vlahović.

Most of the participants hold that standard Croatian language should be used in the media; however, majority of people also believe that slang can be used in the media. The participants here refer to the fact that the language in the media depends on the genre of the show. In entertainment shows slang is acceptable, while in formal tone shows, such as the news, standard Croatian is preferred. Most participants feel connected to the topic of a certain show when hosts use language that resembles the language the audience use.

The participants tolerate the occasional expression of personal opinion on a subject by television hosts. Nevertheless, the participants believe that media language has influence on the public's opinion.

7. Conclusion

The thesis describes the concept of communication accommodation theory, language and the media, and the connection between the two.

During conversation, people adjust their language to their interlocutor. If the interlocutor accepts accommodation well, the conversation undergoes the process of convergence. If not, it undergoes the process of divergence. Case studies confirm that the theory can be applied in various context, such as media language.

The present study deals with opinions about language used in the media and attitudes towards media language. The results show that the majority of participants believe that television hosts adjust their style. Depending of the genre, the style varies from formal to informal. Television hosts also change their style depending on the target audience. According to the participants, television hosts accommodate to the audience but not to the extent to which the requirements of the genre are disregarded. Nevertheless, the differences between genres used to be more transparent, and more attention was paid to language. Accordingly, it is believed that the difference between formal and informal media language style will be less noticeable in the future.

References

1. Bell, A. (1991). *The Language of News Media*. Oxford: Blackwell

2. Bognar, L. (2012). *Klasifikacija medija.* Retrieved from http://ladislav-bognar.net/node/81 (29.7.2015.)

3. Christopherson, L. (2011). Can u help me plz?? Cyberlanguage accommodation in virtual reference conversations. *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 48* (1), 1-9.

4. Communication Accommodation Theory. Retrieved from http://www.liquisearch.com/communication_accommodation_theory (20.7.2015.)

5. Coupland, J., Coupland, N., Giles, H. (1988). Accommodating the elderly: Invoking and extending a theory. *Language in Society, 17* (1), 1-41.

6. Coupland, N., Jaworski, A. (1997). *Sociolinguistics: A reader and a coursebook.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan

7. Dornyei, Z., Csizer, K. (2005). The effects of intercultural contact and tourism on langugae attitudes and langugae learning motivation. *Journal of Langugae and Social Psychology, 24*(4), 327-357.

8. Durant, A., Lambrou, M. (2010). *Language and Media.* London:Routledge.

9. Fox, S.A. (1999). Communication in families with an ageing parent:A review of the literature and agenda for future research. *M. E. Roloff. Communication Yearbook, 22,* 377-429.

10. Gallois, C., Giles, H., Ogay, T. (2005). Communication Accommodation Theory:A look Back and a Look Ahead. *Theorizing About Intercultural Communication,* 121-148.

11. Galtung, J., Ruge, M. (1973). Structuring and selecting News. *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance, and the Class Media,* 66-72.

12. Giles, H. (1979). *Language and Social Psychology.* Oxford: Blackwell

13. Giles, H. Coupland, J., Coupland. N. (1991). Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence. *Contexts of Accommodation.*

14. Giles, H., Ogay, T. (2007). Communication Accommodation Theory. *Explaining Communication: Contemporary Theories and Exemplars.*

15. Giles, H., Smith. Ph. (1979). Accommodation Theory: Optimal Levels of Convergence. *Language and Social Psyschology.*

16. Giles, H., St. Clair, R. (1979). *Language and Social Psychology.* Baltimore: Basil Blackwell

17. Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk.* Oxford:Blackwell.

18. Griffin, E. (2008). *A First Look at Communication Theory.* Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

19. Gudykunst, W. (2003). Intercultural Communication Theories. *Cross-Cultural and Intercultural communication,* 171-174.

20. Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic.* London: Edward Arnold.

21. Harwood, J., Soliz, J. (2002). Perceptions of Communication in a Family Relationship and the Reduction of Intergroup Prejudice. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 31* (4), 320-345.

22. Hummert, M. (1990). Multiple stereotypes of elderly and young adults: A comparison of structure and evaluations. *Psychology and Aging, 5*(2), 182.

23. Hummert, M., Mazloff, D.C. (2001). 'Older adult' responses to patronizing advice: Balancing politeness and identity in context. *Journal of Langugae and Social Psychology, 20,* 167-195.

24. Jones, E., Watson, B., Gardner, J., Gallois, C. (2006). Organisational Communication: Challenges for the New Century. *Journal of Communication, 54*(4), 722-750.

25. Llamas, C., Mullany, L. Stockwell. P. (2007). *The Routledge Companion to Sociolinguistics.* London:Routledge.

26. Laswell, H. (1948). The structure and function of communication in society. *The Communication of Ideas,* 117-130.

27. McCann, R. M., Giles, H. (2006). Communication with People of Different Ages in the Workplace: Thai and American Data. *Human Communication Research, 32,* 74.

28. McCroskey, J.C., Richmond, V.P. (2000). *Nonverbal Behaviour in Interpersonal Relations,* Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

29. McQuail, D. (1969). *Towards a Sociology of Mass Communications.* London:Sage.

30. Nussbaum, J.F., Pecchioni, L., Crowell, T. (2001). The older patient-health care provider relationship in a managed care environment. *Aging, communication, and health: Linking research and practice for successful aging,* 23-42.

31. Nussbaum, J.F., Pitts, M.J., Huber, F.N., Krieger, J.L.R., Ohs, J.E. (2005). Ageism and Ageist Language Across the Life Span: Intimate Relationships and Non-intimate Interactions. *Journal of Social Issues, 61*(2), 287-305.

32. O'Keeffe, A. (2006). *Investigating Media Discourse.* London:Routledge.

33. Ong, W. (1982). *Orality and Literacy:The Technologizing of the World,* London:Routledge.

34. Ryan, E.B., Giles, H., Bartolucci, G., Henwood, K. (1986). Psycholinguistic and social psychological components of communication by and with the elderly. *Langugae and Communication.*

35. Ryan, E.B., Meredith, S.D., MacLean, M.J., Orange, J.B. (1995). Changing the way we talk with elders:Promoting health using the communication enhancement model. The International. *Journal of Aging and Human Development, 41*(2), 89-107.

36. Thanasoulas, D. (1999). Accommodation Theory. Retrieved from http://www.tefl.net/esl-articles/accommodation.htm (20.7.2015.)

37. Thompson, J.B. (1995). *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media.* Cambridge:Polity Press.

38. Turner, L.H., West, R. (2010). Communication Accommodation Theory. *Introducing Communication Theory:Analysis and Application.* NewYork:McGraw-Hill.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Online questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/13x6ffmYhOIVwCvnTCHoaHf9iX_S7FaWS87Nn_d0BIWk/viewform?c=0&w=1

JEZIK I MEDIJI

Spol: M Ž
Dob:
Gledate li televiziju? (1 – nikad, 5 – vrlo često)   1 2 3 4 5
Koje programske sadržaje najčešće?
Smatrate li da televizijski voditelji prilagođavaju jezik ciljanoj publici? (1 – nikad, 5 – vrlo često) 1 2 3   4 5
U kojim situacijama ste primjetili da voditelji prilagođavaju jezik publici?
Ukratko objasnite zašto smatrate da se voditelji prilagođavaju publici.
Usporedite jezik voditelja u emisijama različitoga žanra (primjerice, dokumentarna emisija o Drugome svjetskom ratu, emisija o nogometu, glazbeni show, Big brother i središnji Dnevnik). Treba li se njihov jezik razlikovati ili ne? Objasnite svoj odgovor.
Kakav mislite da bi jezik medija trebao biti? Objasnite svoj odgovor.
Odredite koliko se slažete s ispod navedenim tvrdnjama (1 – uopće se ne odnosi na mene, 5 – u potpunosti se odnosi na mene):
Smatram da se kroz povijest do danas, jezik medija uvelike promijenio.   1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da je ranije jezik medija bio primjereniji nego što je danas.   1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da su se ranije televizijski i radijski voditelji bolje izražavali nego što to čine danas. 1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da se u svim medijima treba koristiti standardni hrvatski jezik. 1 2 3 4 5
Smartam da se u medijima može koristiti *slang*.   1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da jezik u medijima odražava povezanost s publikom.   1 2 3 4 5
Osjećam povezanost s temom emisije kad voditelj koristi jezik blizak meni. 1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da voditelji emisija mogu izražavati svoje stavove.   1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da jezik u medijima treba odražavati objektivnost, bez obzira na situaciju. 1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da jezik u medijima služi za povezivanje publike s određenim medijem. 1 2 3 4 5
Smatram da jezik medija može utjecati na stavove publike.   1 2 3 4 5
Mislim da će u budućnosti razlika između formalnog i neformalnog jezika u medijima biti nezamjetna. 1 2 3 4 5