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Unit 37:

Presentation roles and techniques:

In all forms of factual media, there is often a presenter, who talks over, or in between events on screen, or is even featured on screen. Either way, they present the programme, a job that entails moving forward through a series of events on screen.

The techniques and roles of presenters will change depending on the type of factual program they appear in, but will also change based on the audience, and their preferences and expectations. For instance, the presentation techniques of a newsreader will differ to those used by a newsreader from a different station, since the audience is different. They will also differ from a filmmaker presenting a documentary, since this is a different format of programme.

Newsreader:

A newsreader presents news programmes. Generally news programmes are set in a studio with a backdrop of an office, or a city setting, or even no backdrop at all. The number of newsreaders on set usually doesn’t exceed two or three, but seeing three newsreaders is especially rare. A newsreader addresses the audience directly, by talking to camera, but they may also talk to their co-anchor if they have one.

Continuity announcer:

A continuity announcer is the person who voices over the breaks between programmes on most TV stations. They often ask rhetorical questions about the plot of the programme before it starts, or if it’s a factual programme they’ll talk about what it’s going to be about. A continuity announcer will also give warnings as to whether the programme has a lot of graphic or explicit content.

Magazine show presenter:

A magazine show presenter is similar to that of a newsreader or a talk show host, since what they do is an amalgamation of both presenting styles. A magazine show presenter will interview people in a studio, and talk directly to the audience, but at the same time, the program features news style reports on stories throughout England, and the rest of the world. A good example of a magazine show is ‘The One Show’ on BBC1.

Talk show hosts:

Talk show hosts are looked at as a very typical form of presenter, since they have a very basic role, which is to engage in discussion and activity with the guests on the show, and to talk to the audience to introduce the show, to end it, or to give the viewers information, which they didn’t already know. Most talk shows don’t feature any footage that doesn’t come from the studio (news stories, interviews, field reports, etc), so the presenter doesn’t talk to anyone outside of the studio either.

Documentary presenter:

A documentary presenter talks about the events and information that are featured in documentaries. Documentary presenters may appear on screen, or they may simply be a voice, describing things as they happen. They might even do a bit of both, but their role is always the same, and that is to show information to the viewer.

Game show host:

A game show host is similar in some ways to talk show hosts, since they talk to both the audience at home and in the studio, and to the people who are featured on the programme itself, however they aren’t just talking for the sake of talking like guests on talk shows do, a game show host talks to contestants so that they can tell them their options, or ask them what their next move will be, or generally anything that will move the game forward.

Verbal techniques:

For different presenting roles, different techniques must be adopted to meet the expectations of the audience, and to fulfil the roles of that specific type of presenting. A large part of this are the verbal techniques used by different presenters.

Breadth of vocabulary:

Most presenters will likely have a large vocabulary, including words and phrases exclusive to the topic that they are presenting.

Phrasing:

Some newsreaders will phrase headlines in a way that presents the information in a different light, or take a quote out of context by phrasing it differently, emphasising the wrong words to tarnish the person who spoke them.

Illustrative language:

Illustrative language is often used to elicit an emotional response from the audience. In factual programming, illustrative language can be used when a person is recalling events that have happened to them, to describe the emotional state they were in at that time.

Tone of voice:

Tone of voice can change the way that sentences work, and as such makes tone of voice a powerful rhetorical device. In factual programming, a presenter’s tone of voice can change based on their style of presenting, for instance a presenter like Louis Theroux might use a softer tone of voice to depict impartiality, whereas someone like Alex Jones, who presents infowars would use a harsher, angrier, more confrontational tone of voice.

Visual techniques:

Presenters are more often seen on screen than not, and as such must *present* themselves in a particular way. Appearance is a big factor into visual presentation techniques, but other techniques can even include body language.

Dress and appearance:

Dress and appearance of presenters change depending on the type of programme and presenting style they use. Newsreaders will want to look more official, so they will rarely be seen out of a suit and tie, whereas documentary filmmakers might take a more ‘honest’ casual look. Appearance is a persuasive presentation technique since a person’s appearance tells us certain things about them before they even open their mouth.

Body language:

Body language is another persuasive visual tool a presenter can use, since we can be told so much on an instinctual level, just by looking at how a person is positioned, or what their facial expression is. If an interviewer has their arms crossed, it is clear they are opposed to the ideas being presented to them by whoever they are interviewing, and this transfers to the viewer as part of the narrative: the person being interviewed is bad.

Physical gestures:

Physical gestures are another part of body language: a person’s thoughts and opinions can be conveyed through something as simple as hand movements. A person can wave their hand, or throw up their arms to signal that they think something is ridiculous, they can shrug to show uncertainty, they can put their hands in their pockets to show neutrality, and hold their chin to look thoughtful. All sorts of gestures can translate as thoughts and ideas.

Facial expressions:

A person’s facial expression tells us a lot about what they’re thinking or feeling, and is one of the clearest forms of expression we have. Facial expressions are great rhetorical devices in documentaries because if the presenter has a furrowed brow whilst in conversation, we know they’re sceptical or confused, and even if the documentary is meant to be impartial, this imparts information to the viewer about how to think of the events on screen.

Context:

Context can change the way that a presenter presents, for instance, in the context of the BBC, since it funded by the public, the BBC tries to remain impartial, so they do not offend any of the ideas, opinions or values of members of the general public, since their money also pays for them to continue to make programmes, and remain as a channel. Newsreaders for the BBC will try their best to remain impartial for this reason, and will adjust their presentation style to do so, I.e: won’t be confrontational, won’t be rude, won’t use illustrative language, won’t focus on opinions over facts, etc.