

## Television Media Language in Algeria: A Theoretical and Descriptive Study of its Levels and Characteristics

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Received: 29/01/2024,

Accepted: 21/11/2025,

Published: 10/12/2025

**ABSTRACT:** *The rapid evolution of modern communication technologies has profoundly reshaped media production and audience interaction. In particular, television has emerged as a dominant audiovisual medium capable of merging image, sound, and movement into dynamic linguistic expressions. This paper aims to explore the nature of television media language in Algeria, focusing on its levels and characteristics as a hybrid linguistic system that operates between classical Arabic and colloquial speech. Adopting a theoretical-descriptive approach, the study analyzes how linguistic choices in television discourse reflect sociocultural realities and communicative needs. It also illustrates, through selected examples from Algerian TV broadcasts, how television employs a “middle language” that balances clarity, accessibility, and expressive power. The paper contributes to the field of media linguistics by offering a structured framework for understanding the evolution, functions, and sociolinguistic implications of television language in Arabic-speaking contexts.*

**KEY-WORDS:** Media Language, Television Discourse, Audiovisual Communication, Linguistic Levels, Algerian Arabic, Sociolinguistics.

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## Introduction

The emergence of advanced communication technologies has transformed the production, distribution, and consumption of information in contemporary societies. In this new media environment, language functions not only as a tool of expression but also as a strategic medium of influence. Television, as one of the most powerful audiovisual platforms, integrates sound, image, and movement to construct meaning and shape public perception. It does not merely transmit news or entertainment; rather, it plays a crucial role in socialization, opinion formation, and the construction of collective consciousness (El-Helwany, 2002, p.66).

Given its vast audience and multimodal nature, television requires a distinctive linguistic system one that is comprehensible, persuasive, and emotionally engaging. This linguistic system, commonly referred to as media language, reflects a balance between formality and accessibility. It avoids excessive abstraction typical of scientific discourse and the aesthetic density of literary expression, yet it also refrains from descending entirely into colloquialism.

In Algeria, the question of media language is particularly complex due to the country's linguistic duality. The legacy of colonial history, the coexistence of classical Arabic, colloquial dialects, and French expressions, and the recent influence of global media have all contributed to a multifaceted linguistic landscape. Television, as a daily companion to millions, has thus become a laboratory where linguistic adaptation and hybridization are continuously negotiated.

This study aims to explore these dynamics through a theoretical and descriptive lens, analyzing how television language has evolved, what linguistic levels it encompasses, and what communicative functions it performs in Algerian society.

## 2. Problem Statement

Despite the growing importance of television in shaping language use and cultural identity, academic research in Algeria has rarely provided a systematic examination of television media language. Most available studies remain either descriptive or general, lacking a clear theoretical framing of the linguistic mechanisms involved. Consequently, the present study addresses the following main research question:

What are the primary levels and characteristics of the media language used in Algerian television, and how do they reflect the interaction between linguistic norms and sociocultural realities?

From this question emerge two subsidiary inquiries:

1. How does television balance between classical and colloquial Arabic in its linguistic practices?
2. What communicative functions and stylistic features distinguish television media language from other forms of discourse?

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to theoretically delineate the nature of television media language and to identify its levels, functions, and defining characteristics. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- \* Clarify the concept of media language in its audiovisual dimension.
- \* Describe the linguistic levels (classical, colloquial, and mixed) that shape television discourse.
- \* Examine the sociolinguistic and communicative implications of using these levels in Algerian television.
- \* Illustrate, through descriptive examples, how language choices in TV broadcasts align with audience expectations and technological contexts.

## 4. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to both media studies and linguistics by situating television discourse within a broader framework of sociocultural communication. It highlights how the interaction between linguistic variety and audiovisual form gives rise to a unique communicative code.

In the Algerian context, the research is especially relevant because it reveals how television functions as a site of negotiation between language standardization and linguistic diversity. By identifying the levels and functions of media language, this paper offers analytical tools that can support linguistic planning, media training, and audience-oriented communication strategies.

## **5. Literature Review**

### **5.1 The Emergence of Media Language as a Field of Study**

The relationship between language and media has become a central topic in communication and linguistic studies since the mid-twentieth century. The development of mass media press, radio, television, and later digital platforms has led scholars to identify a specific linguistic domain often referred to as media language or media discourse (Charaf, 2009).

This concept recognizes that each medium operates through a semiotic system shaped by its technical and communicative properties. The written press, for example, privileges precision, narrative coherence, and grammatical accuracy. Television, by contrast, relies on multimodality: meaning is co-constructed through sound, image, movement, and speech. Consequently, its language tends to be more performative, simplified, and contextualized (Abu-Arkoub, 1993).

In the Arab world, academic interest in media language grew during the late twentieth century, particularly as satellite broadcasting expanded the reach of television. Linguists such as Belaid (2000) and Attar (1997) emphasized the need to examine how Arabic, in its classical and colloquial forms, adapts to the requirements of modern mass communication.

### **5.2 Evolution of Media Language**

Historically, media language has undergone several phases of transformation paralleling technological and social developments.

According to Belaid (2000), three major stages can be identified:

1. The Rhetorical Stage – Early media discourse, especially in newspapers and radio, adopted a literary and rhetorical tone, borrowing heavily from traditional forms of eloquence.
2. The Transitional Stage – During the 1970s, media language began to move away from ornamented expression toward a more informative, semi-formal style.
3. The Modern Stage – Contemporary media discourse values simplicity, precision, and directness. It integrates colloquial expressions to ensure accessibility, while maintaining enough formal structure to preserve linguistic integrity.

This evolution reflects what linguists describe as the law of communicative ease (El-Tawab, 1999), according to which language naturally simplifies in response to social and technological needs.

### **5.3 Classical and Colloquial Arabic in Media Communication**

Arabic is characterized by a phenomenon of diglossia, meaning that speakers routinely alternate between Fusha (Classical Arabic) and ‘Ammiyya (colloquial dialects) depending on context and audience. In media communication, this diglossic dynamic plays a fundamental role.

Classical Arabic, as the language of education, religion, and formal writing, ensures clarity and authority. Colloquial Arabic, on the other hand, facilitates intimacy and immediacy, bridging the gap between broadcaster and viewer (Al-Saleh, 2000).

In Algerian television, this linguistic duality is particularly evident. News programs and official broadcasts typically use Classical Arabic, while talk shows, entertainment segments, and interviews often incorporate colloquial phrases or regional dialects. This interplay generates a hybrid media code that merges linguistic authenticity with communicative efficiency.

#### **5.4 The Concept of Linguistic Equivalence**

Taoufik Al-Hakim (as cited in Charaf, 2009) introduced the notion of linguistic equivalence as a dynamic balance between two forces formality and spontaneity. Media language exemplifies this equilibrium: it strives to remain accessible without losing precision. In practice, equivalence in television discourse implies maintaining mutual intelligibility across different social and educational groups while preserving linguistic correctness.

The equilibrium between classical and colloquial forms thus constitutes a socio-functional adaptation. It reflects the media's objective to communicate effectively with a heterogeneous audience ranging from intellectuals to ordinary citizens through a shared linguistic middle ground.

#### **5.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Audiovisual Media Language**

Television, as an audiovisual medium, requires the synchronization of multiple semiotic codes. McLuhan (1964) famously asserted that "the medium is the message," highlighting how the technical nature of a medium shapes its linguistic form. In television, language is inseparable from image, sound, and gesture. The interaction among these elements creates a multisensory experience where meaning is not conveyed by words alone but also by tone, rhythm, and visual context (Eltouni, 2002).

Consequently, the television language differs from that of print or radio. It privileges short sentences, clear pronunciation, and rhythmic cadence suitable for oral delivery. It avoids complex syntactic structures and abstract vocabulary, favoring instead a conversational and inclusive tone. Maxwell (1998) emphasizes that brevity and semantic clarity are not merely stylistic choices but functional necessities in audiovisual communication.

#### **5.6 Previous Studies in the Algerian Context**

Although several works have examined the general relationship between Arabic and media, few have focused specifically on Algerian television. Djeflal and Belkhiri (2021) explored how Algerian Radio Channel 1 promotes environmental citizenship through linguistic framing, revealing how language choices influence civic engagement. Achouri and Belkhiri (2023) analyzed online satirical media and found that hybrid linguistic registers—combining classical Arabic, dialect, and even French enhance audience reach and emotional engagement.

These studies collectively suggest that Algerian media operates within a multilingual and multidialectal environment, where language serves as both a communicative tool and an identity marker. However, a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding television media language in this context remains lacking hence the relevance of the present study.

### **6. Methodological Framework**

#### **6.1 Research Design**

This research adopts a theoretical-descriptive approach grounded in qualitative analysis. Rather than collecting statistical data, the study relies on a synthesis of scholarly works and an interpretive reading of selected Algerian television programs. This approach is appropriate because the objective is conceptual: to delineate the levels and characteristics of media language rather than to measure its frequency or distribution.

#### **6.2 Data Sources**

To illustrate the theoretical discussion, the study incorporates symbolic examples drawn from observed Algerian television broadcasts, including:

- \*ENTV (National Television) news bulletins.
- \*Public talk shows addressing cultural and social topics.
- \* Entertainment and interview programs targeting youth audiences.

These examples are not presented as empirical samples but as illustrative cases used to demonstrate linguistic phenomena such as code-switching, tone modulation, and register adaptation.

### 6.3 Analytical Approach

The analysis proceeds through three interpretive stages:

1. Identification of Linguistic Levels distinguishing between classical, colloquial, and mixed usage.
2. Functional Interpretation assessing the communicative role of each linguistic choice (informative, expressive, or persuasive).
3. Sociocultural Contextualization interpreting how these linguistic strategies correspond to audience expectations and media objectives.

By combining theoretical reasoning with contextual illustration, the study aims to achieve a balanced perspective that aligns with both linguistic and media analysis traditions.

## 7. Analysis and Discussion

### 7.1 The Linguistic Levels of Television Media Language

Television media language in Algeria operates across three primary linguistic levels: aclassical, a colloquial, and a mixed. Each of these levels serves distinct communicative purposes and reflects specific sociolinguistic contexts.

#### a. Classical Level

The aclassical level corresponds to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), characterized by grammatical accuracy, formal structure, and a vocabulary drawn from literary and religious traditions.

In Algerian television, this level predominates in:

- \* News broadcasts and official announcements.
- \* Documentary narration and educational programs.
- \* Formal interviews with academics or government officials.

Its primary function is to convey a credibility, precision, and authority. Classical Arabic signals institutional legitimacy and ensures that the information is perceived as objective and factual. However, excessive reliance on MSA may create a communicative distance between the broadcaster and the average viewer, especially among audiences less familiar with formal Arabic syntax.

#### b. Colloquial Level

The a colloquial level includes various regional dialects used in everyday Algerian communication. In television discourse, colloquial language typically appears in:

- \* Talk shows and entertainment programs.
- \* Street interviews and vox pop segments.
- \* Social debates and informal interactions.

Colloquial Arabic allows for a emotional proximity and a spontaneity. It fosters a sense of authenticity and familiarity, reinforcing the idea that the broadcaster speaks “the people’s language.”

Nevertheless, its use poses certain challenges: dialectal expressions may vary across regions, potentially leading to limited comprehension for audiences from different linguistic backgrounds.

#### c. Mixed Level

The a mixed level represents a dynamic interplay between classical and colloquial forms. It is the most prevalent form in Algerian television discourse, particularly in semi-formal programs such as cultural magazines, panel discussions, or morning shows.

This hybrid language enables flexibility: presenters often start in Classical Arabic to introduce a topic, then shift to colloquial expressions for elaboration or emphasis. This a code-switching serves both pragmatic and rhetorical functions, ensuring clarity while maintaining audience engagement.

The coexistence of these three levels demonstrates the diglossic fluidity of Algerian television. The communicative choice depends on the nature of the program, the target audience, and the intended effect of the message.

## 7.2 Functional Aspects of Television Media Language

The functions of media language have been classified by Charaf (2009) and Djad (2003) into three main categories: informative, expressive, and persuasive. Television discourse mobilizes all three functions simultaneously, though their dominance varies depending on context.

### a. Informative Function

This function centers on the transmission of facts, data, and events. In television news, the informative function is achieved through concise and standardized phrasing, supported by visual and auditory cues.

For instance, ENTV's evening bulletins often employ formal constructions such as "The Minister of Health announced today..." followed by audiovisual evidence (images of press conferences or official visits).

The informative function is reinforced by syntactic simplicity and lexical precision, both essential to prevent misinterpretation.

### b. Expressive Function

Television programs frequently aim to evoke emotions or convey social values. In entertainment shows or social debates, expressive language is achieved through tone modulation, idiomatic expressions, and metaphorical language.

For example, hosts may use colloquial exclamations like "Sah!" or "Ma tkhalish!" (Don't miss it!) to stimulate emotional resonance. This linguistic informality transforms television into a space of shared affective experience rather than mere information exchange.

### c. Persuasive Function

Television remains one of the most influential media for persuasion whether in advertising, political campaigns, or awareness programs. Persuasive discourse relies on strategic lexical choices, repetition, and emphatic structures to shape audience attitudes.

For instance, public service announcements promoting civic behavior (e.g., environmental protection or road safety) often employ a rhythmic, slogan-like style that combines verbal and visual persuasion.

The integration of non-verbal elements such as voice tone, facial expression, and background music amplifies linguistic influence, demonstrating that persuasion in television is multimodal by nature.

## 7.3 The Characteristics of Television Media Language

Television media language possesses distinctive linguistic and stylistic characteristics that distinguish it from written or purely oral communication. The following features are particularly relevant:

### 1. Brevity and Simplicity:

Sentences are short, clear, and rhythmically balanced to suit oral delivery. Overly complex syntax or academic terminology is avoided to maintain flow and comprehension.

### 2. Repetition and Emphasis:

Repetition serves as a rhetorical strategy to reinforce key messages. Anchors may reiterate headlines or main ideas to ensure retention, reflecting the principle of "redundancy for clarity."

### 3. Conversational Tone:

Television discourse mimics spoken interaction. Presenters adopt a direct, audience-oriented tone, often addressing viewers as participants rather than passive receivers.

### 4. Allusiveness and Indirectness:

Due to editorial constraints or sociopolitical sensitivities, some television discourse employs allusion or euphemism. Implicit meanings often replace direct critique, allowing messages to circulate subtly (Feroukh, 2010).

### 5. Multimodal Integration:

Language interacts with non-verbal codes images, sounds, gestures to construct meaning. Each linguistic choice is accompanied by visual and acoustic reinforcement, enhancing comprehension and emotional engagement.

### **6. Sociability and Accessibility:**

The vocabulary used is generally familiar and culturally embedded. The best presenters master a “spoken-literary” register that maintains clarity while sounding natural and spontaneous. These characteristics collectively demonstrate that television language is neither literary nor dialectal, but a functional middle code adapted to audiovisual communication.

### **7.4 Illustrative Case: Language Use in Algerian Television**

To demonstrate the interplay of linguistic levels and functions, the following illustrative case is considered: In a morning talk show broadcast by ENTV, the presenter opens with a Classical Arabic greeting:

“Ahlan wa sahlana bikum fi barnamajina al-yawmi.”

Then transitions into colloquial Arabic to introduce the guest:

“Maana el-yawm el-fannan el-maaruf li kul el-jumhoor...”

The switch from aAhlan wa sahlana (formal welcome) to ael-fannan el-maaruf li kul el-jumhoora (the artist well-known to all viewers) reflects a functional adaptation: the first phrase situates the show within a formal frame, while the second builds familiarity and warmth.

Similarly, in a news “be-wilayatina”, the anchor maintains Classical Arabic for most of the broadcast but occasionally softens expressions with colloquial markers such as ayuh-al muttabiain al-kirama (“dear viewers”) to humanize the communication.

This selective alternation of registers exemplifies the hybrid linguistic nature of Algerian television, where the goal is not linguistic purity but communicative effectiveness.

### **7.5 The Sociolinguistic Dimension**

Television language in Algeria mirrors broader sociolinguistic realities. The coexistence of Arabic, French, and regional dialects results in a polyglossic media environment.

This diversity enriches media expression but also poses challenges for standardization. The choice of linguistic level becomes a reflection of identity politics:

- \* Using Classical Arabic affirms national and cultural unity.
- \* Using colloquial Arabic expresses inclusivity and social proximity.
- \* Mixing codes illustrates adaptability and modernity.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, television thus performs an integrative role it bridges linguistic diversity while promoting a shared communicative code.

## **8. Findings and Scientific Contributions**

### **8.1 Main Findings**

The analysis conducted throughout this study highlights several significant insights about the nature of television media language in Algeria:

#### **1. Hybrid Linguistic Structure:**

Algerian television operates through a hybrid linguistic system that combines Classical Arabic, colloquial dialects, and, occasionally, foreign lexical influences (mainly French). This hybridization ensures a communicative balance between linguistic correctness and audience accessibility.

#### **2. Functional Specialization:**

Each linguistic level serves a distinct communicative purpose:

- \* Classical Arabic ensures credibility and formality.
- \* Colloquial Arabic provides emotional resonance and spontaneity.

\*Mixed usage allows presenters to shift between authority and intimacy depending on context.

### **3. Multimodality as a Linguistic Enhancer:**

Television meaning-making is not limited to verbal expression; it is reinforced by visual, auditory, and gestural cues. This multimodal interaction creates a layered semiotic system where words, tone, and imagery collaborate to produce meaning.

### **4. Sociolinguistic Reflection:**

The linguistic diversity of Algerian television mirrors the multilingual reality of the country. It embodies both a symbolic and functional dimension—affirming national identity while adapting to the linguistic habits of diverse audiences.

### **5. Communicative Efficiency over Linguistic Purity:**

The guiding principle of television discourse is not adherence to grammatical perfection but communicative effectiveness. Brevity, clarity, and immediacy often outweigh strict linguistic formality.

## **8.2 Scientific Contribution**

This paper contributes to the growing field of media linguistics by providing a structured theoretical framework for understanding the linguistic dynamics of Algerian television.

Specifically, it offers:

- \* A conceptual typology of linguistic levels (classical, colloquial, mixed) adapted to audiovisual contexts.
- \* A functional model identifying three communicative purposes (informative, expressive, persuasive) within television discourse.
- \* A symbolic descriptive analysis that illustrates how diglossic alternation operates as a strategic tool rather than a linguistic deficiency.

Moreover, this research broadens the scope of Arabic media studies by emphasizing that television language is not a deviation from linguistic norms but rather a modern communicative evolution that integrates sociocultural, psychological, and technological dimensions.

## **9. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **9.1 Conclusion**

The study concludes that television media language in Algeria represents a unique communicative phenomenon that transcends traditional linguistic classifications. It functions as a “middle code” situated between the formalism of Classical Arabic and the spontaneity of colloquial dialects designed to meet the diverse expectations of a heterogeneous audience.

Through its hybrid form, television language fulfills the dual mission of the media: to inform and to engage. It achieves this through linguistic flexibility, visual support, and emotional accessibility. This flexibility does not signify linguistic decay; rather, it demonstrates adaptability a core characteristic of living languages that evolve alongside society and technology.

The Algerian experience further illustrates how media institutions act as mediators between standardization and diversity, authority and accessibility, and tradition and modernity. Thus, television media language can be viewed as both a linguistic laboratory and a mirror of cultural transformation.

### **9.2 Recommendations**

In light of the findings, several recommendations can be proposed:

#### **1. For Media Practitioners:**

- \* Training programs should emphasize functional bilingualism and stylistic adaptability, helping presenters master both Classical and colloquial registers.
- \* Greater attention should be paid to pronunciation, clarity, and tone to enhance communicative efficiency in audiovisual delivery.

## 2. For Linguists and Researchers:

\* Further studies should employ empirical and corpus-based methods to quantify code-switching frequencies and analyze linguistic patterns across program genres.

\* Comparative research between Algerian and other Arab television networks could help identify regional similarities and differences in media language evolution.

## 3. For Educational and Policy Institutions:

\* Media literacy programs should include components on language awareness, highlighting the role of media in shaping linguistic norms.

\* Language policy should recognize television as a partner in promoting functional Arabic literacy while respecting dialectal diversity.

By aligning linguistic precision with communicative accessibility, Algerian television can continue to strengthen its role as both a cultural bridge and a national unifier.

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