Media Language: is the way in which the meaning of a media product is communicated to the audience.

Language: the key conventions (features) you would expect to find associated with a media product. The language is different depending on the product and the platform.

Semiotics: the study of signs and symbols and what they mean.

Denotation: what you can see/hear – the sign

Connotation: what this suggests – the deeper meaning to you/the audience

| Denotation: Skull with two bones crossed | Connotation: danger, death, pirates, poison |
| Denotation: The colour red | Connotation: Danger, passion, love, anger |
| Denotation: Black rimmed glasses | Connotation: Clever, nerd, geek, intelligent, educated |

### Analysing Media Language: Media Language Framework

We can divide codes of media language into three categories – these can help you to understand the meanings of a media product.

#### SYMBOLIC
- Lighting & Colour
- Setting & Locations
- Facial Expressions & Body Language
- Objects
- Key Signifiers/Images
- Clothing, Hair & Make Up

#### WRITTEN
- Slogans
- Font style
- Headlines
- Captions
- Choice of words
- Emotive language
- Size of text
- Language techniques

#### TECHNICAL
- Camera Angles
- Framing of shots (ELS, LS, MLS, MS, CU, ECU, POV)
- Cropping
- Juxtaposition (2 separate signs that together make contrasting meaning)

Key word | Description | Example
--- | --- | ---
Convention | Typical features of a genre or product | Horror films conventionally feature a villain and low key lighting
Denotation | The surface meaning of a sign – what you see | A gun in a film poster being held by the character.
Connotation | The deeper meaning of the sign | Gun signifies action and violence. The character holding the gun is the hero/villain.
Signifies | What something suggests | The gun signifies violence
Sign | An element in a media product that is used to communicate something | Low key lighting is a sign of a dark theme/story
Polysemic | A sign can have many different connotations/interpretations depending on the audience | The colour red could connote danger or passion or anger. The colour red is therefore polysemic.
Audience reception | How the audience receive / interpret the meaning of a sign | Media producers want audiences to accept and agree with their messages. Audiences will either agree with, reject or negotiate the dominant messages.
Stereotypical | A widely held and over simplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. | Boys stereotypically like sports, cars and video games. Girls stereotypically like the colour pink, fashion and make up.

When you analyse a media product you should look at the above signs and describe (denotation) and then explain what this suggests to the audience/reader (connotation). You could then evaluate the interpretations of the signs (polysemic).
**Theoretical Framework**

**Representation:** the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way.

Representation is not a ‘window to the world’ – it is how the media producers want you to see the world!

**Representation** is the process of how reality is constructed for an audience (this is known as Mediation)

**EVENT**

Something happens e.g. USA win many medals in the Olympics

**MEDIATION**

(The slant put on the event by the media)

Fox News reports that USA are ‘winning’ the Olympics due to the amount of medals they have but UK have more Gold medals so this is not 100% accurate.

**REPRESENTATION**

(This is how the event is presented by the media)

Preferred reading

What the producers want you to read / understand.

**USA are winning Olympics!**

Alternative reading

What the audience member thinks / feels. They may reject the representation or partly agree/disagree.

**USA are not winning/USA are doing well but not winning!**

**Stereotypes**

Representation often includes stereotypes but to be completely fair in the media these need to be avoided. Stereotypes are a widely held, often negative and over simplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. Have a look at the below examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>STEREOTYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WOMEN</td>
<td>Motherly, cooking, cleaning, feminine, weaker gender, emotional, concerned about appearance...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>Masculine, strong, powerful, dominant gender, sports, gadgets, emotionally strong, cars...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEENAGERS</td>
<td>Unruly, rude, lazy, disrespectful, defiant, unmannered...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although these are negative, stereotypes are used in media products so that the audience quickly recognise the characters and can pick up the narrative easily.

**Key word**

**Description**

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype</td>
<td>A widely held and over simplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archetype</td>
<td>A very typical example of a certain person or thing. For example a male archetype would be very masculine and muscly, strong and powerful with short hair and tall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Powerful for example men are seen as more dominant than women. Another meaning for dominant is the main idea. For example the dominant message in the media is that adults must work and pay their taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>Lower in rank, status, or quality. For example, women are usually seen as inferior to men (this is a stereotype).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>The action or fact of carefully choosing something as being the best or most suitable of the message. This includes what is, and isn’t, included!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Technical and symbolic codes – how things have been designed, laid out, edited, put together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>How the maker/producer draws on all possible ideas and resources to present their version of events/perspective to you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A media audience may be as small as one person reading a magazine or as large as billions of people around the world watching events, like 9/11, unfold live on television. Audiences have a complex relationship with the products they consume.

**Audiences**: are the people consuming the media product.

### Theoretical Framework

**Audience theories**

- **The Hypodermic Needle Theory** suggests that media inject messages into the brains of audiences and they are controlled by these messages. If you watch something violent, you will act violent.
- **Uses & Gratifications theory** suggests audiences actively seek out media products to satisfy their needs and pleasures. For example, audiences want to be entertained so will find funny clips on YouTube to watch. Will visit a website to find out. Audiences are active.

#### Passive audience

A passive audience suggests that media has an effect on them.

- Accepts media messages
- Easily influenced
- ‘Watch’ media
- Controlled by media
- Does not make own use of the messages or interpret in own way

#### Active audience

An active audience suggests that audiences interact with media.

- Involved in their own interpretations and form own opinions
- Create their own meanings
- Question or respond to media
- In control of their own mind and not influenced by media

### Target audience

A **target audience** is a particular group at which a media product is aimed. Every media product needs an audience to target.

### Demographics

Demographics is: dividing consumers into groups based on age, gender, income etc. This can help media producers determine their **target audience** for particular products and develop ads geared toward a specific demographic. Media producers typically combine several to define a demographic profile.

### Active audiences

Active audiences are also able to interpret and form their own opinion on media messages, question messages and are not influenced. Reception theory looks at the how messages are received by audiences. If they negotiate or oppose, they are active.

### Audience Reception Theory: Stuart Hall

According to Stuart Hall, audiences receive messages in one of three ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE AND DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DOMINANT or PREFERRED READING</td>
<td>NEGOTIATED READING</td>
<td>OPPORTSINAL READING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Audiences will agree with the message. This means that they have received the message intended by the media producer. THIS IS WHAT THE MEDIA PRODUCER WANTS</td>
<td>- Audiences will accept parts if the producer’s views but have their own opinions and views on it as well. This means they have received the dominant reading but do not 100% agree.</td>
<td>- Audiences will reject the message (opposed reading) based on their own views, experiences and culture. This means the producer’s message was not received in its intended.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Media products are consumed by different audiences in different ways – an audience member can be passive or active.

#### Passive audience

A passive audience suggests that media has an effect on them.

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#### Active audience

An active audience suggests that audiences interact with media.

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In the UK, the term "public service broadcasting" refers to broadcasting intended for public benefit rather than making money. All of the BBC's television and radio stations have a public service remit, including those that broadcast digitally. Every household in the UK must pay a licence fee. In return, the BBC provides viewers with a service of programmes with wide appeal that are guaranteed to conform to its public service remit to 'inform, educate, and entertain.'

The media industry can be defined as a varied collection of organisations that share the production, publication and distribution of media products. In this context, “media” refers to publishing outlets for TV, film, books, video games, newspapers, magazines, radio and other modern forms of information delivery. Examples of media organisations include: BBC, Newscorp, Disney, Time Warner, Sony and Comcast.

Theoretically, media is controlled by a small number of companies primarily driven by the logic of profit and power. Media concentration generally limits or inhibits variety, creativity and quality. More socially diverse patterns of ownership help to create the conditions for more varied and adventurous media productions.

Power and Media Industry Theory
By Curran & Seaton

Curran and Seaton says that:
- media is controlled by a small number of companies primarily driven by the logic of profit and power.
- media concentration generally limits or inhibits variety, creativity and quality.
- more socially diverse patterns of ownership help to create the conditions for more varied and adventurous media productions.

Horizontal Integration is where an organisation develops by buying up competitors in the same section of the market e.g. one music publisher buys out other smaller music publishers and they end up owning more than one company at the ‘production’ stage.

Vertical Integration is where an institution has shares or owns each part of the production and distribution process. For example: Warner Bros Entertainment calls itself a fully integrated broad based entertainment company which owns film studios and the means to distribute the films as well as some of the cinemas in which they are shown. A company can become vertically integrated if they purchase another company that is within the production process, e.g. if a film production company purchases a distribution company. Warner Bros in itself is part of an even bigger conglomerate called Time Warner which is a huge media conglomerate institution which uses horizontal integration to consolidate its power and profits – so Warner Bros Entertainment is vertically integrated but owned by one of the big six media conglomerates, which is horizontally integrated.

The BBC would be both vertically and horizontally integrated... but remember their aim is to serve. The British public, not make profit.