



12

RADIO PROGRAMME PRODUCTION

If you listen to radio at least once in a while, you may remember a few programmes. You remember them because you liked them. You liked them because they were interesting. You do not remember a majority of programmes because what is heard is fast forgotten. We have already discussed about this feature of radio in the lesson on 'characteristics of radio'.

To make a programme interesting, it has to be produced well. Radio production is a very vast subject. Due to constant change in technology, the techniques of radio production keep changing. But the basics remain the same. You may have the best of ideas, the best of scripts and the best of voices; but if the programme is not produced properly it will not be interesting to listen to.

In this lesson, you will learn about the process of radio production and its different components.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following :-

- describe the qualities required for a radio producer;
- explain the main elements of radio production;
- distinguish between three different types of microphones;
- identify music and sound effects for radio production;
- classify the different stages of radio program production;
- state the importance of a script in a radio programme.

12.1 QUALITIES OF A RADIO PRODUCER

You may have observed that anybody can be a cook, but only the food prepared by some turns out to be very tasty. Similarly all people who produce radio programmes may not come out with good and interesting programmes.



You need certain qualities or skills to be a radio producer. The qualities you need include the following:-

- (a) **ability to see and hear what is happening around you.** This would mean a keen desire to know more about things. We may call this inquisitiveness. Unless a person is inquisitive, he or she cannot be a good radio producer. This is because you need ideas to produce interesting programmes. How do you get ideas? Let us think. Firstly, we need to observe things to get ideas. Remember the story of Isaac Newton who observed an apple falling? This observation led him to wonder why the apple fell down from the tree and why it did not go up. The result was Newton's gravitational theory.

Let's take another example. James Watson was boiling water in a kettle. When the steam gushed out with force, he realized that force or power could be used. The result of this paved the way for the invention of the steam engine.

So you can get ideas by:

- (i) observing things as discussed above.
 - (ii) drawing from experiences : We have good and bad experiences in life. People who have written stories, novels, poems and plays draw their ideas mostly from their experiences. The great poet Kalidasa saw the dying bird and its pair which was sad and took to writing poems. The English poet Wordsworth observed flowers (daffodils) dancing in the air and wrote one of the best pieces of poetry. So from our own experiences or going through the experiences of others, we get ideas.
 - (iii) You have just read about the experiences of others. How do you come to know about them. Well, you need to talk to others to find out and understand their experiences.
- (b) **Ability to conceptualise ideas:** You may get any number of ideas, but you need to turn them into concepts and then in to radio scripts.
- (c) **Creativity :** What is creativity ? Are you creative? This is a quality which is found in almost everyone. But you need to be creative in putting together an idea in a manner which can attract people .Creativity would mean, doing something new or different. The same idea can be made into a radio programme differently by different people. If everyone does it in the same way, they will all be the same and not interesting.
- (d) **A good user of words.** You need the ability to use the right word at the right time in the right manner. Radio programmes depend on a good script and that depends on your ability to write well. For this you need a very good knowledge or stock of words or a good vocabulary. You have to be using words in the appropriate manner. We shall deal with this aspect later.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.1**

1. List out any three qualities or skills required to be a good producer of radio programmes.
2. How does a radio producer generate ideas?



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12.2 ELEMENTS OF RADIO PRODUCTION

You have already studied about the ingredients of a radio format. Can you recall them? They are:

- (a) Human voice or spoken word.
- (b) Music
- (c) Sound effects

The various elements of radio production flow from the above ingredients of a radio format.

So let us look at the main elements of radio production.

- (i) **Studio :** In the previous lesson, you have learnt that the radio studio is a room where radio programmes are recorded. For producing a radio programme, you need a 'sound proof' studio where human voice can be recorded or broadcast in the best manner.
- (ii) **Microphones:** For our voice to be recorded in a studio, we use a microphone. You might have used or at least seen microphones. They amplify or in other words, increase the volume of your voice. When you speak before a microphone, you don't have to shout. You speak normally and it will be made louder if you use a loudspeaker to listen to. When we think of radio, the microphone is the most important element using which you present your programme.

There are basically three types of microphones and they are known by their directivity. As you go through the following text, you will understand the term 'directivity'.

- (a) **Uni-directional microphone :** As the name suggests, this microphone picks up sound from one direction. As you speak in front of it, your voice is picked up. If you speak from the other side of the microphone, your voice will not be picked up properly. In a radio studio, the announcers, presenters and newsreaders use this type of a microphone.

A microphone is very sensitive and you need to use it carefully. You should be at the right distance from it when you speak. Otherwise, your voice will not sound good. Even if you turn a paper or breathe heavily, the microphone will pick up that sound and your programme or your voice will be affected.



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- (b) **Bi-directional microphone:** Here again as the name (bi) suggests, the voice or sound is picked up from two directions. If you are recording an interview in a radio studio, you may use this type of a microphone.
- (c) **Omni-directional microphone:** You may be familiar with the word omni. We say god is omnipresent, which means 'present everywhere'. In the case of an omni-directional microphone, it picks up sound from all directions. This type of microphone is used when a number of voices are used in a single programme like a radio discussion or a radio drama.

There are many other types of microphones which come in different sizes and lengths. If you watch television programmes, you may find a small microphone clipped on the collar. This is called a *lapel microphone* which is actually a uni-directional microphone. These microphones are not normally used in radio. Then there are long microphones called *gun microphones* used in sports production. These microphones are often omni directional ones. There are also *cordless microphones*. You might have seen them being used in stage shows. They do not have any cables or wires attached to them. They have a small transmitter in them which can send the sounds to an amplifier.



Fig. 12.1: Microphones

- (iii) **Sound effects :** Sound effects in a radio programme give meaning and sense of location. It adds realism to a programme and helps a listener to use imagination.



Think of a crowded market or temple. If you are creating that scene in a radio programme, you do not have to go to a crowded market or temple to record. Well, you can record those sounds and use them. But in most cases, you use sound effects which are already recorded. Sound effects can be used in two ways:

- (a) spot effects or effects that are created as we speak and
- (b) recorded sound effects.

If you are recording a radio programme in which someone knocks at the door, you can make a knocking sound either on a door or a wooden partition. Or you want to show that someone is pouring water from a bottle into a glass; here again you can use the actual sounds produced on the spot. But if you want a lion roaring or a dog barking, you probably cannot bring a lion or a dog to the studios! Here we use recorded sounds which are kept on tapes or discs. Almost all sounds are available on CDs which you can try and use. There are also certain types of computer software available for this.

You can also create sound effects.

You can use two coconut shells to produce the sound effects of the sounds of horses' hooves.

Take a piece of cellophane paper or aluminum wrapper and crush them in front of a microphone. Record the sound and hear. It will sound as if fire is raging. You can think and create many such sound effects.

However, there is a word of caution. If you record an actual door opening, you may not get the real feeling of a door opening when you record it. What matters is what it sounds like and not what it is.

- (iv) **Music :** Music is the soul of radio. It is used in different ways on radio as already discussed in the earlier lesson. Film songs and classical music programmes are independent programmes on radio. Music is also used as signature tunes or theme music of various radio programmes.

Let us see what music does to any programme.

- a. Music adds colour and life to any spoken word programme.
- b. Music can break monotony.
- c. Music is used to give the desired effect of happy or unhappy situations, fear or joy.
- d. Music can suggest scenes and locations. For example, you have to create a bright early morning situation. This can be done by playing a pleasing note on the flute along with the sound of chirping birds.

- (v) **Artificial echo:-** If you enter an empty building or fort and shout, your voice



will come back to you. This is called an echo. An echo is used in radio programmes. This is a technical input.

(vi) **Filter or distort:** If you listen to someone speaking to you on phone, the voice would not sound normal. This sort of effect called distort is produced using technology. Some times distort is used along with echo. Think of someone speaking from a mine 100 feet below the earth. To make it realistic, distort and echo are used.

(vii) **Human voice:** The main stay in any radio programme is the human voice. Think of the voice of an announcer or newsreader on radio. You often find them very pleasant and nice to listen to. That is because of the quality of their voice and the proper use of it. There are two aspects of the use of human voice in radio production. Firstly, there has to be a well written script to be spoken and then someone has to speak or read it before a microphone in a studio.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.2

1. Name the different types of microphones used for recording sound.
2. Answer the following in one word:
 - i) What type of microphone is the lapel microphone?
 - ii) What is the other name for filter effect?
 - iii) What type of studio is required for producing a radio programme?
 - iv) What type of sound effects are created as we speak?
 - v) Give one example of a technical input used in radio programmes?

12.3 RADIO PROGRAMME PRODUCTION

Now let us learn about the different stages of radio programme production.

Whatever we do, there has to be a clear plan. In the case of radio production also, there is a well accepted process of production which is carried out in three stages.

Let us list them out.

- a) Pre-production
- b) Production and
- c) Post-production
- a) **Pre-production**

As the title suggests, this is the first stage before the actual production.



- i) **An idea is born :** This phase includes how a programme is born as an idea and its conceptualization. The topic or subject matter is decided.
 - ii) **Plan of action :** After the topic is decided, a plan of action is worked out. Here the format of the programme is determined i.e whether the programme is a talk, discussion, interview, drama, documentary etc. Once that is clear, the right person for writing the script and the performers are decided. The plan of action would also determine the equipment for outside recordings that are required. The time and venue of the recording are also worked out.
 - iii) **The script** is examined to make it suitable for broadcast. It is examined according to the principles of writing for radio or in other words 'for the ear'. We will discuss this in detail in the next section.
 - iv) **Paper work :** If people who are not working in the radio station are involved for writing or providing voice for the programmes, they have to be invited with an agreement to accept the job or assignment. This type of agreement is referred to as a contract. Similarly, permission is often required to interview certain people if the programme is based on such interviews. Therefore, as you can see, there is a lot of paper work at the pre-production stage.
 - v) Rehearsing the voices of speakers is also part of this stage.
- b) **Production :** This is the actual process of recording and editing a radio programme. Proper studios, microphones and computers are required to record and edit the programme.
 - c) **Post production :** Writing to inform people involved in the production is a major activity during this phase. The programme has to be given publicity both on radio and in other media. This is done to ensure that people know about the programmes and also listen to them. The announcements for the presentation of the programme are also written and provided for the actual broadcast of the programme.

12.4 WRITING FOR RADIO

In the previous section you have learnt that the script is examined according to the principles of 'writing for radio'. Let us discuss about the importance of the script in a radio programme.

What happens when you listen to your favourite announcer speak on radio ?

You may say that you would like to continue to listen to the announcer.

But why ?

Well, because you like what they say and the way they say that.



Don't you ?

What they say is in most cases drawn from a script. The way in which they say it is about the whole idea of using their voice.

We shall now discuss about the language we use in radio.

When we refer to the language used in radio, we are not referring to any particular language like English or Hindi but the style of any language used in radio. Here in radio, you find that it is different from the language used in newspapers and magazines or what is referred to as print media.

In the print media, everything is written down or printed and they exist in the pages of the newspaper or magazine. You can keep them for as long as you want. You can take your own time to read them. If you do not understand them in one reading, you can read them again and understand. If you do not know the meaning of any word, you can refer to a dictionary to understand the meaning.

Now think of radio. You hear programmes as they are broadcast. You hear them only once. Ofcourse, you may say that you can record them and listen to them. record it and listen to it later. Well, that generally does not happen. In our day to day conversations, we speak, someone else listens, or someone speaks and we listen. It is a momentary experience. You may or may not remember what you said or heard.

Similarly, what you hear on radio is heard only once and then forgotten in a majority of cases. Do you remember all that you had spoken yesterday ? Do you remember all that you heard from others yesterday ? Ofcourse, the answer is a big 'no'.

In our day to day conversation, we do not use the words and expressions found in a newspaper editorial or a feature article. Have you wondered why this happens? It is because those words and expressions are neither friendly nor easy to understand. Now compare that with your daily conversation. You use simple words, sentences and familiar expressions. You also take into account the person to whom you are speaking. Your gestures and movements add to what you speak.

Now let us go back to your favourite announcer. You don't see the person. But yet you feel that the person is speaking to you. You may not say anything but you may feel that there is some familiarity with that person. Interestingly, in most cases, what you hear on radio is written down or scripted. It is spoken and is heard only once.

From what you have read so far, we can come to certain conclusions.

- First of all, when it comes to radio, you listen to a person who is not seen.
- The person speaks from a script written down earlier.
- You feel that the person is talking to you.



- The person sounds friendly and you have no problem in understanding what is being said.
- You can call the language or the words used in a radio script as the spoken word as against the written word or the printed word used in the print media.
- Unlike the printed word which is written for the eye, the spoken word is written for the ear.

Let us list out the main characteristics of the spoken word.

- i) Though it is written, it is spoken
- ii) It is written for the ear not the eye.
- iii) It is heard only once. The listener normally does not get a second chance to listen.
- iv) It is conversational and should therefore sound like one and have the following qualities :
 - a) It should be simply worded without any difficult or unfamiliar words.
 - b) The sentences should be short and simple and not complex.
 - c) There should be only one idea in a sentence and not many ideas.
 - d) Though there are thousands of listeners, what is written should be meant for just one listener. At the listening end, there are generally only one or two persons and not a crowd. So it should be speaking to one person.
 - e) The words chosen should denote the exact meaning and not be vague or abstract .
 - f) The words should make pictures in the minds of the listeners.
 - g) Abbreviations or short forms should be avoided. If an abbreviation is used, then its full form should be given.
 - h) If the script consists of big numbers it can be rounded off to the nearest whole number.
 - i) While referring to more than one person, avoid using 'he' or 'she' . It can confuse the listeners.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 12.3

1. Name the different stages of radio production. List one activity in each of the stages.
2. The spoken word in radio has certain characteristics. List at least three of them.



Notes



12.5 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Radio production

- > Qualities of a radio producer
 - inquisitiveness
 - drawing from experiences
 - ability to conceptualise ideas
 - creativity
 - good user of words
- > Elements of radio production
 - studio
 - microphones – unidirectional, bidirectional, omnidirectional
 - sound effects
 - music
 - artificial echo
 - distort
 - human voice
- > Stages of radio production
 - pre-production
 - production
 - post production
- > Writing for radio
 - importance of a script
 - style of language
 - characteristics of the spoken word



12.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the qualities or skills required to be a radio producer ?
2. Write short notes on the following:
 - i) microphones
 - ii) sound effects
 - iii) music

3. Explain the different stages of radio production.
4. Illustrate the different characteristics of the spoken word.



12.7 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

12.1 1. Refer to section 12.1

2. Refer to section 12.1

12.2 1. Refer to section 12.2

2. i) unidirectional
- ii) distort
- iii) sound proof studio
- iv) spot effects
- v) echo

12.3 1. Refer to section 12.3

2. Refer to section 12.4



Notes