

a radio drama. The background music in a radio drama is helpful in making a scene lively.

Radio is a sound medium but absence of any sound is also an important part of language of radio. This really is the most interesting contradiction that no radio programme can be imagined without natural and even deliberate pauses or silences. Pause is an integral part of the grammar of radio. The use of a comma or full stop in print is replaced by that of a pause in radio.

2.4 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LANGUAGE OF PRINT AND RADIO

Having understood the basics of radio language as a spoken language, we can now very well understand the difference between languages of print and radio. Sometimes experts invited for broadcast don't understand the requirements of radio and bring a script designed more for the print media, i.e. using the characteristics of 'written word' and not 'spoken word'. Let us try to understand the delicate difference through some examples.

In a newspaper if we read an article we may find – 'we should take the precautions mentioned below'. Likewise we may say 'the above facts are important' in an article. However, as there is no 'below' or 'above' in spoken language, using similar phrases in a radio talk will sound ridiculous. Again, instead of mentioning dates in radio, the use of 'yesterday', 'day before yesterday' or 'last week' or 'last month' etc. may be better suited as spoken language.

In radio, we try to paint a picture through spoken words as radio is a blind medium. Hence, if we say that the height of Bhakra Dam is 740 feet, it may not conjure a picture. But, if we say that Bhakra Dam is as high as three Qutub Minars put one above the other, then it will make a visual impact in the mind of a listener. We may also say that the height of Qutub Minar is the same as 125 people standing on one above the other. It again creates a visual.

Similarly in print we may say that the capitals of Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia are Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta respectively but in Radio it will be appropriate to say that Tokyo is the capital of Japan, Kuala Lumpur is Malaysia's capital and Jakarta is the capital of Indonesia, thus avoiding the use of word 'respectively'. We avoid using complex and complicated sentences in radio language. Simple words and short sentences are the requirements of radio communication.

Likewise, while talking about history, instead of saying '1520 AD' it might be better to say approximately 500 years ago. Long figures such as 'Rupees 15 lakhs 53 thousands 9 hundred 74' may be better said as 'about 15 and half lakhs' or 'more than 15 lakhs'.

To summarise of what we learned in this part of the Unit, we can say that a radio listeners may be engaged in some other activities while listening to radio; therefore we should keep our words simple and friendly as in our normal conversation. Long and complicated sentences need to be avoided. Short sentences and simple words are essential requirements of radio language.

2.5 RADIO WRITING FOR DIFFERENT RADIO FORMATS

Just as poetry, short story, novels, drama, essays, travelogues etc. are different formats of literature, similarly there are many formats of radio programmes and these formats are created by combinations of the four elements of radio i.e. spoken word, sound effect, music and pause. Pause is a compulsory element for all the formats. If we take only spoken words (no sound effect, no music), we get the following formats:

1. Radio Talk
2. Dialogue
3. Interview
4. Discussion
5. News Bulletin

If we combine spoken words with sound effects we have the following formats:

1. Quiz
2. Radio Report
3. Live Commentary

If we combine spoken words, sound effects and music, then we have:

1. Radio Feature/Documentary
2. Radio Drama
3. Radio Spots (Advertisements/commercials)
4. Radio Serial
5. Docudrama
6. Newsreel

Every Radio format has its own attraction and requirements. We choose a format as per available airtime, subject or theme, target audience, etc. Thus, while a radio advertisement may be of just 30 seconds duration, a radio play may be 15 minutes to 1 hour long, and a talk may usually be of 4 to 9 minutes. We have to understand a particular radio format before writing a script for it.

It has to be understood here that certain formats of radio programmes have to be unscripted by their very nature. For instance, running commentary of a sports or non-sports event cannot be pre-scripted as it is essentially a live description of what is happening on the spur of the moment. However, proper preparation and having detailed background material are indispensable for running commentaries also. Similarly, interviews and discussions are also extempore formats but systemically preparing talking points is essential for these, so that invaluable radio time is put to optimum use.

Activity – 1

Listen to different scripted radio formats like talks, plays, documentaries, etc. and then compare them with non scripted formats like interview or commentary.

2.6 RADIO WRITING – BROAD CATEGORIES OF PROGRAMMES

After understanding the language of radio, we should also be aware of the various fields for which radio writing can be done. We have a vast range of subjects for people of all age groups having varied interests. Broadcasting touches many areas of our life and so the scope for radio writing becomes almost unlimited. It is, however, worth mentioning that, unlike AIR stations, private FM channels should not be taken as the representative model of a radio station. The main purpose of private radio channels is earning commercial revenue through mostly entertainment oriented programmes. They use not more than 3 to 4 programme formats out of more than 25 programme formats available to programme producers. Let us know in detail what kinds of programmes are broadcast from a radio station dedicated to public service broadcasting. That would make you familiar with the whole scenario of broadcasting. But, first we should know the three major functions or objectives of broadcasting, which result in three broad categories of programmes.

2.6.1 To Inform (Information based Programmes)

From the very beginning, the first and foremost purpose of radio broadcasting has been to provide information to the listeners. Many informative programmes are broadcast every day from a majority of radio stations. News bulletins and programmes on current affairs are prime examples of this role played by radio. Although now there are hundreds of television channels and also social media platforms from where one get all sorts of information, the role of radio as the primary information disseminator to a wide spectrum of society continues to be relevant.

2.6.2 To Educate (Awareness based Programmes)

To educate is the second most important function of radio. This is particularly true of broadcasting in India. Radio serves people by not only informing them about the latest happenings but also imparting education to them in a non-formal manner. Radio stations broadcast educational programmes for the listeners to supplement their knowledge.

There are millions of visually challenged people who cannot avail the benefits of print and visual media. Radio provides great service to these people by giving information and education, thus enabling them to lead a productive and dignified life. Radio has also done a great service by educating the farmers about the improved techniques of agriculture and opportunities for better marketing of their produce. It also helps the students' community by imparting them education of high quality.

2.6.3 To Entertain (Entertainment based Programmes)

Entertainment is the third most important activity of broadcasting. While there are multiple means of entertainment available for affluent people in larger cities, multitude of people still get a lot of their entertainment from radio programmes. In fact, a special service named 'Vividh Bharati' with a mix of film music and other light hearted programmes was created in 1957 by All India Radio to cater to the entertainment needs of millions of people all over the country. Now, FM channels of AIR namely FM Rainbow and FM Gold also serve the infotainment needs of the people.

Private FM Channels function with a focus on entertainment, whereas AIR FM channels also devote airtime for information and education.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note :** 1) Use the space provided below for your Answers.
 2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. How is Radio writing different from other media?

2. What are the three broad categories of radio programmes?

2.7 IDENTIFYING THE LISTENERS

After learning about the broad categories of programmes, radio writers should also know about the programmes for special audiences.

Whenever we plan a programme and write a script for it, we have to keep in mind the listeners of that programme. Certain programmes are for all the listeners but many are targeted at special groups of audience. When we write for a particular audience group, we also need to identify various sub-groups and their particular requirements. For example, radio stations have programmes for women but all women may not have identical interests. A housewife may have some requirements but a working woman may have different requirements. Similarly, needs of an unemployed youth would be different from those of a young person holding a good job.

2.8 RESEARCH FOR A SCRIPT

Any radio script can be effective on the basis of its content, which depends on the research about the subject. Let us take an example. If a talk on the historic Red Fort in Delhi, mentions about the fact that the road opposite Red Fort going to Chandni Chowk used to be a ‘Canal’ during the Mughal period, will certainly attract the attention of the listener. Listeners may like this information, which might be hitherto unknown to them that the road which is now brimming with heavy traffic is the place where people used to enjoy boating in the moonlight. To find out unknown, rare facts on a given subject, we should consult books on the subject, go through magazines for relevant articles, consult subject matter specialists, visit a particular place or tourist spot or historical building concerning the subject and so on. Formats like documentaries require deep and detailed research. But, even for writing a radio talk of 5 minutes, the importance of research can’t be ignored. If we write for radio without proper knowledge of facts, it will only be a ‘play of words’, which would be unethical and will almost mean cheating the listeners.

2.8.1 Example of a Documentary

Let us take a practical example to understand about the need of in-depth research for a format like a radio documentary. Suppose you have to write a script for a documentary on 'Suicides in India'. You will have to find out the average annual number of suicides in the country along with the data and information on various aspects such as tendency for suicide in different age groups, reasons for suicide, government efforts to prevent suicides, role of NGOs, society, family members, friends, etc. Information about the trends in other countries and preventive efforts made is also relevant.

For a documentary on 'Suicides in India' broadcast by All India Radio, the writer carried out the research by consulting psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, writers, social workers and government officials on various known and unknown aspects of suicide. He also consulted books research papers, magazines and internet. The writer also talked to those who had tried to commit suicide but survived. Legal experts and family members of those who committed suicide were also consulted. A number of lesser known facts emerged from the research like:

India is among those countries of the world where large number of suicides take place. In India every 6 minutes someone commits suicide and 100 people attempt suicide every hour. The tendency to commit suicide is not confined to cities only, it has reached smaller cities, towns and even villages.

Many children commit suicides due to increased pressure and expectations from family and schools. Many elderly people are also committing suicide due to depression and loneliness.

Suicides indicate mental illness but mental health has not been given due attention in our country. People hesitate to go to a psychiatrist or counsellor due to the perceived stigma of being called insane.

About 95% of the people contemplating suicide can be saved, if timely help can be offered to them and that 'vulnerable' moment can be avoided. In fact, the attempt to commit suicide is a 'cry for help'.

Now, you must have understood the importance of the research for a particular subject.

2.9 ATTRACTIVE BEGINNING

After you have done proper research on a subject and get down to write a script for radio, the most important aspect is an attractive beginning. You must have observed that newspapers often give very catchy, interesting and attention seeking headline to their news stories. For instance, there was a headline "Pak PM throws a no ball" making dramatic use of the fact of the Pakistani Prime Minister having been a well-known cricket bowler.

Attractive beginning is important for all the mass media but in a radio programme it is very crucial as this medium has no visual dimension like television or cinema and, hence, the opening few lines of a radio programme often decide the fate of the entire programme. In the case of television, someone may keep watching the programme because of a favourite actor or actress or a beautiful visual but the same is not true for radio. A very formal beginning of the radio programme has

very little chance of being attractive. Whatever be the subject, the beginning should be such that it connects immediately with the listener, creates curiosity, touches emotions and forces the listener to pay attention and start listening to the programme.

2.9.1 Examples of Attractive Beginning

Suppose you have to write the script of a radio talk on environmental pollution. A traditional formal beginning for this could be:

“Pollution is a serious problem in India. There are mainly three kinds of pollution – air pollution, water pollution and sound pollution.....”

Such a beginning may not attract many listeners because of its formal tone. However, if you start the script in the following manner:

“Taj Mahal is the symbol of eternal love and one of the Seven Wonders of the World. But, are you aware that this gleaming white monument may become black one day? No, it is not just a horrible imagination; the increasing environmental pollution can make this a reality one day, if we don’t wake up now and start protecting our environment”...

Such a beginning is much more likely to catch the attention of the listeners because Taj Mahal touches a chord with every Indian, as it is a symbol of glory and also one of the prominent identities of India.

Similarly if you have to write a talk or documentary on the Bheel tribe, a formal beginning might be like this:

“In India there are many tribes. Bheels are one such prominent tribe. They live mainly in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.....” Again such a formal opening may not appeal to many listeners. But to make the programme connect better with listeners, we have a number of other informal opening options.

1. We may begin with the story of ‘Eklavya’ who gave his ‘thumb’ to his ‘Guru’ (teacher) as ‘Gurudakshina’ or fee.
2. Story of ‘Shabri’ in Ramayan who offered fruits to Lord Ram after tasting them to check whether they were sweet enough.
3. Story of great warrior Maharana Pratap, who was given shelter by ‘Bheels’ in the forests when he was fighting the army of Akbar.

2.9.2 Maintaining the Flow of Script

An attractive beginning catches the attention of the audience and makes them listen to our programme, but that is not all. We have to ensure that our listener continues to listen to the whole programme with maximum possible attention. If after a good beginning, the writer is not able to maintain the flow and the progression of the script does not arouse any curiosity then the programme will not achieve its objective. Hence, it is necessary for a radio writer to ensure that along with the use of informal and friendly language, relevant and interesting facts on the subject continue to be presented in an attractive manner so that the listener remains engrossed in the broadcast.

The talker may be a very renowned and knowledgeable person but while broadcasting he/she should use interactive phrases such as ‘let us see why it happens’ and ‘you must be wondering why it is so’ just to establish a friendly rapport with the listener and make them a partner in discussing the subject.

Basic rules of a Radio script:

a) Use simple words: Easier simple and common words should be used. We need to remember how we talk, not how we write. Radio is a medium whose least common denominator audience are the laymen, using simple words is really important. A list of a few radio appropriate words in English is provided below. I am sure you can find such equivalents in your own mother tongue too:

Written	Spoken
Adequate	Enough
Anticipate	Expect
Commence	Begin, start
Conclude	End
Manufacture	Make
Purchase	Buy
Underprivileged	Poor

- b) Use short sentences:** Sentences should avoid conjunctions as much as possible. The sentences should ideally be of a length appropriate for talking. Remember, unlike print we cannot go back to the sentence and rehear it.
- c) One idea per sentence:** One sentence should carry one idea. Never clutter one sentence with too many ideas.
- d) Avoid sound clashes:** Read your copy aloud for awkward sounds. Be sparing in the use of ‘s’ ‘th’ and ‘ing’ sounds. Avoid words like ‘thrust’, ‘wrists’ and ‘frisked’ all of which are difficult to pronounce.
- e) Use present tense:** This is especially relevant for news bulletins, particularly the headlines. For conveying the immediacy and to drive home the urgency of news, use of present tense is a cardinal rule. For example:

The Monsoon Session **has commenced (commences)**

We **have responsibility** for quality..... **(are responsible)**

The Prime Minister **has inaugurated** the project **(inaugurates)**

- f) Use active voice:** Scripts should be written in active voice, for example: -
A new governor was **appointed by the President.... (President appointed)**

Ten shops were **destroyed by a fire** ... (A fire destroyed)

A meeting will be held **by the teachers**.... (Teachers will hold a)

- g) Avoid stock phrases, superfluous words and clichés. Below is a tentative list of each word that we tend to use every day while writing in English (which is not exhaustive):

Stock Phrases:

“Lead from the front” – Where else?

“Follow in x’s foot steps”- just follow

“Ground rules”- just rules

Superfluous words:

Set a *new* record

Died in a *fatal* accident

Holiday *period*

Future plans

It is a *true* fact

In a week’s *time*

First priority

Past History

Check Your Progress 2

Note : 1) Use the space below for you answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1. What are the basic rules of writing a radio script?

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2.9.3 Precautions for Final Draft

Once you have written and evaluated your script for a radio programme and found it suitable for broadcast, keep the following precautions in mind while preparing a final draft:

- 1. Script should be typed or written only on one side of a sheet so that no noise is recorded while turning the pages.
- 2. It is better to finish a paragraph on the same page. If that is not possible, at least, the sentence should be completed. Carrying an incomplete sentence on to the next page should be avoided because it will create a break in the flow of reading at the time of recording. A new page should always begin with a new sentence.
- 3. Nothing should be written which is against the code of conduct of the concerned broadcast organisation.