UNIT 13: RADIO NEWS EDITING

UNIT STRUCTURE

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the basic functions of radio editing.
- learn the principles of radio editing.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

News on radio ranges from in-depth coverage round the clock, to brief hourly summaries, to no news coverage at all on some stations. Nearly every broadcast market now has received or can receive signals from one or more radio stations that feature news. Some of these stations have an all-news format; some provide news during mornings and evening drive times and some give hourly reports researched and written by a news staff.

You must have all listened to local and national radio news bulletins. Though radio news presentation is considered by some people to be a much simpler task than compiling a television news bulletin, radio news production is not only about putting together some audio elements. It is about stringing them in such a manner so as to construct a meaningful story for the audience in a concise and precise manner.

Radio news editing is similar to editing and designing a TV news bulletin. While TV editing is carried out to accommodate the various audio

and visual elements, radio news editing is about putting together the relevant audio elements to create a meaningful story within the limited air-time available to it for its broadcast. As a result it is very necessary for radio news editors to edit the news story in a manner which tells the story in the most **succinct** of ways and in the most limited time.



Succinct: Expressed clearly and in few words.

This unit will introduce you to the basic concepts of radio editing. You will learn how to edit sound for radio programmes.

13.3 CONCEPTS OF RADIO EDITING

Sound editing is a creative process for selecting and assembling sound recordings in preparation for the final sound mixing or mastering of a radio news programme, or any production involving recorded or synthetic sound. Sound editing is used out of the need to fix the incomplete, undramatic, or technically inferior sound recordings.

There are primarily three divisions of sound that are combined to create a final mix, these being dialogue, effects, and music. Radio editing demands the knowledge of how to handle it all, often crossing over into the mixing of realms as well. Editing effects are likened to creating the sonic world from scratch, while dialogue editing is likened to taking the existing sonic world and fixing it. Dialogue editing is more accurately thought of as “production sound editing”, where the editor takes the original sound recorded on the set, and by using a variety of techniques, makes the dialogue more understandable as well as smoother, so that the listener doesn’t hear the transitions from shot to shot (often the background sounds underneath the words change dramatically from take to take). Among the challenges that effects editors face are creatively adding together various elements to create believable sounds for everything you see on screen, as well as memorizing their sound effects.

There are several reasons why you may want to edit your work:

- You can cut down the duration of your work by removing unnecessary sections, repetition, long pauses etc.

- You can make your interview or recording sharper and more to the point.
- You can remove unwanted noises, e.g. chairs creaking, doors slamming, coughs, sneezes or **splutters**.
- You can correct vocal mistakes in reading.
- You can rearrange the structure your recorded material to make it more easily understood.
- You can fill a time slot with a tape of the correct length.



Splutter: To make series of short, explosive spitting or choking sounds.

Sound editing is a process that requires both skill and instinct. Today, most sound editing is done digitally using specialized software. It was not always this way. Magnetic tape and tape recorders were first invented in the late 1940s.

Using magnetic tape for recording and editing sound was the status quo until the mid 1990s when computers and digital software revolutionized the sound editing process.

The editing process, then, was slow, tedious, and sometimes unstable. To edit sound with magnetic tape, the user had to find both points on the tape where the splice needed to occur, place the tape in an "editing block" which provided a pre-cut splice area sunken at a 45 degree angle, place the tape in the block, use a razor blade to cut the tape in the 45 degree angle groove, and then physically join the magnetic tape back together with a specially designed editing tape.



Splice: Joining of pieces of film or tape at the ends.

And if you screwed up the splice, then you had to undo everything, use the editing tape to put the magnetic tape back the way it was, and then try again. It was a tedious and sometimes frustrating work. The user had no visual of the recorded sound to refer to, either. It was all done by the ear.

The Tools - Software Options

Today, there are several software options for editing sound for radio. The essential piece of equipment used in modern sound editing is the digital audio workstation, or DAW. A DAW allows sounds, stored as computer files on a host computer, to be placed in timed synchronization with a motion picture, mixed, manipulated, and documented. The standard DAW system in use by the American film industry, as of 2005, is Digidesign's Pro Tools,

with the majority running on Macs. Another system in use presently is Yamaha owned Steinberg's cross platform DAW Nuendo running on Macs using operating system Mac OS X but also on Windows XP.

Many such systems are quite expensive (like Protools, Logic Studio, Neuendo) but there are more reasonably priced options including even a good free program (Audacity). Sound Forge, Adobe Audition have become an industry standard for PC users. Garage Band and Protools are good Mac options. Sony Vegas isn't all that widely used but it is a powerful tool for PC owners. You can certainly start out using Audacity and it may be all you ever need. But for many producers, they end up transitioning to a more expensive and more powerful option.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1. Why is editing necessary in radio? Discuss.

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Q.2. Write a short note on the use of software for radio editing.

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ACTIVITY 13.1

1. Prepare a script for a short radio feature on 'communal harmony' in the aftermath of communal riot that has taken place in your city/town.

13.4 PRINCIPLES OF RADIO NEWS EDITING

Principles of radio news editing : Editing for radio is required for aesthetic reasons but proper editing also keeps a listener's attention. Long audio

pieces - or audio that has extraneous sound in it - tends to bore listeners. Shorter audio accentuated by music, sound effects or sound punctuation keeps a listener's attention and helps the presenter make his/her point.

Editing radio news requires equipment and some technical expertise. However, even the most expert technicians may be inept editor unless they know the basic art of editing. Good radio news editing requires a thorough knowledge of the rules of editing. These rules are fundamental for a good edit, and these must be followed at all times.

Some such rules are given below:

i) Listen as you edit!

Headphones are great for picking up details, but remember that most people listen to the radio while they're driving or cooking dinner. So listen through speakers too. Also, if you're editing digitally, remember that it doesn't matter what the sound waves look like, it matters what they sound like.

ii.) Breaths: Breathing is good.

If you edit out all the breaths, or don't maintain a natural rhythm to the breathing, it won't sound right. Most people breathe between sentences or ideas. Keep in mind that you can switch breaths around - substituting a shorter breath for a longer one, for example, to keep the pace of the actuality. Or a quieter one in place of a really noisy, distracting breath.

iii.) Pauses:

Pauses are natural too, and they can also help with pacing. But with too many pauses and the listener gets bogged down. Remember to use room tone instead of blank space (or virgin tape, if you're editing analog) when you create pauses. Also, when you mix your story, make sure that there's a little room between your actualities and your tracks - but not too much — otherwise your story will sound too rushed.

iv.) Ums/ahs/likes, etc:

Filler words and noises are part of everyone's speech. But if they're too abundant, they can become annoying and they may slow down the story. Unless they convey something important — say you're editing a



Waffling: Speaking in a vague manner without saying anything important.

politician who's waffling in response to a tough question – it is usually best to take them out where you can in short news pieces. But if you are putting together a portrait of a teenager, for example, you should leave some in so that she still sounds like a real teenager. Keep in mind, though, that in radio a normal number of filler words might be distracting. Letting a few in will sound natural but won't stand out.

iv.) Up cuts:

Beware of cutting off the first or last bit of a word. It's easy to do if you're relying on the visuals in Protools, especially with sounds like "s" and "f."

v.) Digital clicks:

Sometimes, while editing digitally, there's a click. It usually happens at the edit, when the sound waves on either side don't match up, but it can also happen at the beginning or the end of an edit. Don't leave them there! Transom.org has some good advice on how to get rid of them if you are using Protocols

vi.) Smoothing ambience/using room tone:

If your actualities are hissy or there's a lot of room tone, your story will sound jumpy, especially if there are studio-recorded (or closet-recorded) tracks in between. It is important to smooth out the beginning and ending of every cut by adding room tone on to either end and fading in and out. The same goes for loud ambience - if there are cars driving by, or a jackhammer in the background, you can either hold the ambience under your tracks or fade into the ambience rather than starting it at full volume.

vii.) Levels:

It is important to make sure that your levels match - especially when you are making internal edits. If a person is quiet at the beginning of a sentence and loud or enthusiastic at the end, it will be hard to take the middle phrase out and still make it sound natural. Also, the tracks and acts should be at around the same volume so that listeners do not have to constantly adjust their radios.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3. What are basic principles of radio editing regarding ambience sound and pauses?

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ACTIVITY 13.2

1. Record a one minute radio news story on the bad road conditions of your city and edit it using any editing software available to you.



13.1 LET US SUM UP

- Radio news editing is about putting together relevant audio elements to create a meaningful story within the limited air-time available to it for its broadcast.
- Sound editing is a creative process for selecting and assembling sound recordings in preparation for the final sound mixing or mastering of a radio news programme, or any production involving recorded or synthetic sound.
- There are primarily three divisions of sound that are combined to create a final mix, these being dialogue, effects, and music.
- Dialogue editing is more accurately thought of as “production sound editing”, where the editor takes the original sound recorded on the set.
- Using magnetic tape for recording and editing sound was followed until the mid 1990s when computers and digital software revolutionized the sound editing process.

- A Digital Audio Workstation, or DAW allows sounds, stored as computer files on a host computer, to be placed in timed synchronization with a motion picture, mixed, manipulated, and documented.
- There are several software options available in audio editing of which the ones mostly used are: Digidesign's Pro Tools, Yamaha owned Steinberg's cross platform DAW Nuendo, Garage Band, Audacity etc.
- Good radio news editing requires a thorough knowledge of the rules of editing.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q.No 1. Editing in radio is necessary because it serves the following purposes:

- To cut down the duration of work, by removing unnecessary sections, repetition, long pauses etc.
- To make interview or recording sharper and more to the point.
- To remove unwanted noises, e.g. chairs creaking, doors slamming, coughs, sneezes or splutters.
- To correct vocal mistakes in reading.
- To rearrange the structure of your recorded material to make it more easily understood.
- To fill a time slot with a tape of the correct length.

Ans to Q.No 2. There are several software options for editing sound for radio. The standard Digital Audio Workstation, or DAW system in use by the American film industry, as of 2005, is Digidesign's Pro Tools, with the majority running on Macs. Another system presently in use is Yamaha owned Steinberg's cross platform DAW Nuendo running on Macs using operating system Mac OS X but also on Windows XP. Many of these are quite expensive but there are more reasonably priced options and even a good free program (Audacity). Adobe Audition has become an industry standard for PC users. Garage Band, Logic Studio and Protools are good Mac

options. Sony Vegas isn't all that widely used but it is a powerful tool for PC owners.

Ans to Q.No 3 . The basic principles of radio editing regarding ambience sound and pause are:

Ambience sound:

It is important to smooth out the beginning and ending of every cut by adding room tone on to either end and fading in and out. The same is true of loud ambience. If there are cars driving by or a jackhammer in the background, one can either hold the ambience under his/ her tracks or fade into the ambience rather than starting it at full volume.

Pauses:

Pauses are natural and they can also help with pacing. But too many pauses make the listener lose his attention. It is always advisable to use room tone instead of blank space (or virgin tape, if you're editing analog) when one creates pauses. In addition if we are required to mix a story, there should be a little room between actualities and the tracks - but not too much — otherwise the story will sound too rushed.



13.7 FURTHER READING:

- Bhatt, S.C (1993) Broadcast Journalism- Basic Principles.Har-Anand Publications Pvt Ltd.
- David, J (2007) Radio Broadcasting Journalism. New Delhi : Cyber Tech Pub
- Dutta, Ankuran. Ganamadhyam aru Samprasar Sangbadikota: Ankuran Dutta . Assam : Publication Board



13.8 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1. Discuss why radio editing is necessary.

Q.2. Name some of the audio editing software options.

Q.3. Discuss the radio editing principles regarding Levels, Upcuts and Breaths.