UNIT 14: AUDIO PRESENTATION

UNIT STRUCTURE

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14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- learn about the different aspects of Audio presentation like Voice Culture and Pronunciation.
- gather knowledge on developing good pronunciation and articulation for radio presentation.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units you learned everything about radio news, reporting and editing for radio, and sound recording. In this unit, we will discuss the necessary traits for presentation in radio.

A fundamental principle in radio presentation is the harmonious blend of sound elements with your voice. Voice is the best tool that radio has to keep its listeners tuned in. Since there are no images in radio, voice is the main instrument used to convey emotion. Speakers must learn to convey the emotions of the text with their voice. Here in this unit, you will get the idea about the proper use of voice and pronunciation and other necessities for a radio programme.

So, let us begin the unit with the first section – Voice Culture.

14.3 VOICE CULTURE

The process of bringing the voice under control is known as **voice culture**, which involves traditional and scientific methods to improve the quality of voice.

Effective control of breath, flexible speech organs, adjustments of resonators, wider range, mental perception, and so on, are the features by which the voice can be trained or controlled.

As radio artistes, you need to build public speaking ability. Radio jockeys or anchors have to concentrate on their voice, its pitch & projection. In case of verbal communication skills voice plays an important role. After all, one maybe knowledgeable in their domain area, but conveying their knowledge may seem like a mammoth task. This is the reason why there is ample emphasis laid on voice culture.

One aspect of culturing the voice is understanding intonation. This is the rise and fall in pitch, which occurs as we speak. There are various patterns of intonation. For instance, there is singsong, monotone, jump up and step down (JUSD), etc. when one intonates, one puts music, melody and rhythm into the way they speak.



Levity: Light heartedness, cheerfulness, humour, etc

Unless your are one of the few producers out there who can make a career out of non-narrated pieces, chances are that you are going to have to voice your piece from time to time. This is one of the most challenging aspects of radio production and can make or break a story. But voicing can also be a lot of fun and it gives you the opportunity to put yourself into your work - to give your piece the emotion or levity the piece deserves. Most importantly, have fun with voicing and let your personality shine through. The following are a few tips that can help you properly voice your work.

In broadcast media the effect of the voice of the announcer is immediate and over-powering. Therefore, no amount of command over language or good on-air presence can compensate for a good voice and presentation skill. It is said that voice bears the reflection of one's personality.

Therefore, we should try to strive for a better and mature voice quality, which would sound appealing to the listeners.

The entire concept of imparting voice training programme will help the presenters of news and programs speak out without straining themselves. Additionally, it will also help them to identify any disorders in their voice and speech which might hinder the listeners. Many well known names of the broadcast world believe that broadcasters can maintain a good broadcast voice through 'hours of practice' and 'a lifetime of respect'. A broadcaster must also follow a daily routine of physical exercise which will help in loosening of the muscles. These muscles are directly or indirectly connected with the voice producing organs.

The dome shaped lungs have a pointed top, which, with the broader base at the bottom just above the diaphragm, appears, like a floor to the chest. The abdominal breathing is governed by the abdominal muscles, which mean breathing in the lower part of the lungs. The abdominal diaphragmatic breathing (ADB) is the recommended one as thoracic-breathing (TB) results in shallow intakes of air, causing quick, uncontrolled exhalation. In case of this type of breathing, the ribcage expands, allowing much airflow. Therefore, this type of exercise is followed by the singers and vocal artists.



Ribcage: The bony frame by the ribs.

- Read out your copy **loud** before you track. Unless you have the benefit of voicing in your closet, you're probably going to have people staring at you while you track- an engineer, the show producer, and possibly your editor as well - all listening to your read. If you have to keep stopping and starting, they're going to get really irritated. Also, you might find that there is a certain word or combination of words that are hard for you to say. Know this in advance so that you can slow down there or change the wording.
- If it helps you - **underline** the words in your copy that you want to emphasize. Sometimes in a live report, you can lose your sense of context and this will help.
- **Breath:** Don't forget to **breathe**! It is no problem if your listeners hear you breathe. This is a completely natural occurrence and

although you are breathing may sound very loud in your headphones, your listeners will find it much stranger if they **don't** hear you breathe. Mark your breaths with an apostrophe or slash. There's nothing worse than running out of breath mid-sentence.

- **Projection:** This goes hand in hand with breathing. Obviously, on the radio, you don't have to shout to be heard. But you do have to have ENERGY behind your voice. If you're not breathing, you can't possibly project and your voicing is going to sound weak. Many people don't know this, but talking quietly actually takes as much or more breath than speaking normally.
- **Pausing and Pacing:** The key is variation. Vary your pacing. You may be reading news, but it is still a performance. You are responsible for bringing the images you have written into people's minds. You can do this by speeding up and slowing down your read at appropriate moments. It is hard for people to tune out when you keep changing things up on them! Allow yourself to pause and don't be afraid of silence. Sometimes people need a moment for your words to sink in.
- **Diction:** You should make sure that you can be understood by the listeners. Your listeners need to be able to hear every 'T' and every 'P' in your copy. You don't necessarily have to read slowly or over-annunciate to achieve this, but you do need to be sure that each word is understood. Radio listeners only have one shot to get what you are saying and if your words are unclear, slurred together, etc., they are going to miss your story.
- **Context/Tone:** Match the tone of what you are talking about. Your job is to give context to your best cuts. If your piece is funny, let yourself laugh. If it's sad, let yourself express some emotion - speak more slowly, lower your tone, etc. Make people **feel** what you are talking about.
- **Personality:** Let it shine through. Don't be afraid to let your personality come through in your voicing. Part of this will be done with your writing, but you need to be able to translate your personality

through your voice. Remember that this is a performance. Keep your audience entertained.

Other Important Tips:

- Make sure you sound like you know what you are talking about. For example, don't mispronounce names! Make sure that you have pronouncers for all names, places, scientific terms, etc. - anything that might throw you during your read.
- One of the worst things you can do is to sound like you are reading. Make it sound natural. Do NOT think about the millions of people worldwide who may be hearing your story. Think about that ONE person driving home from work and tell your story to him or her. If it helps, have someone sit in the studio (or closet) with you while you're tracking.
- In a live report, if you need to cough, clear your throat, or make any other audible bodily function; be sure to use the **cough button** located in most studios. No one wants to hear you coughing.
- Avoid tracking if you have a cold. If you don't have a choice, try drinking some tea with lemon or standing in a steamy bathroom for a while. This should clear things up long enough to get you through your report.
- **Listen and learn:** Listen to the radio, to spoken word, to theater. What kinds of voices move you? What is it about the way certain people talk that makes you listen and want to hear more.
- Practise, and figure out what kind of voicing works best for you. **Everyone** can improve his or her voicing. It is a constant process and the more you do it, the better you'll get. Try out different methods and find what works best for you!

14.4 PRONUNCIATION

As an announcer, you face unique and challenging problems in pronunciation. In reading news, commercial and classical music copy, you'll frequently encounter words of foreign origin, and you'll be expected to read them fluently and correctly. As a newscaster, you'll be expected not only to

pronounce foreign words and names with accuracy and authority, but also to know when and how to pronounce them in the original manner.

The art of sounding authoritative, authentic and comprehensible is not mere utterance of sentences but it needs tremendous hard work and training. The speech organs shape sound waves into phonemes and when these phonemes strung with each other they produce meaningful utterances.



Phonemes: Any of the distinct units of sound that distinguish one word from another. Eg, p,b,d and t in words pad, pat, bad, bat.

Articulation means to utter the vowels with their respective resonant speech. One can experience the resonance of the vowels by starting to utter from one vowel and then slide to another. There is no short cut to attain a disciplined quality voice, but exercise and practice will help in the long run. But one should remember that achieving correct articulation of sound alone will not help but the clarity of production and its subsequent intelligibility to the listener is also important.

Articulation problems arise from a too fast rate of delivery or from improper placement or faulty use of the articulators (the jaw, the tongue, and the lips). Another most important aspect in voice training is pronunciation.

Pronunciation means articulating sounds accurately, observing appropriate word stress, pausing at the right places in connected speech. Pronunciation also requires following the required stress and intonation patterns. It is expected that broadcasters have polished pronunciations. Therefore, they should make a habit to check the dictionary whenever they are in any doubt. Again, another important factor is that we should strive towards sensitizing our ears to assess how we sound to others. Listening to others helps influence our own pronunciation.

Apart from regional differences, some deviations in pronunciation are simply unprofessional. One or more of the following problems can cause mispronunciation.

- *Sloppy or Incorrect Articulation*: If you say AIR for *error* or WIH-UM for *William,* you're mispronouncing because of laziness in the use of your articulators. Say the words *air* and *error* aloud. Note that *air* can be sounded by a simple closing of the mouth and a drawing

back of the tongue; *error* however, requires more effort – two distinct movements of the lips and two movements of the tongue. If you are guilty of sloppy articulation, you should work extensively with the practice exercises on voice quality and articulation.

- *Physical Impairment:* Missing teeth, a fissure in the upper lip, a cleft palate, nasal blockage, or any degree of facial paralysis may make it impossible for a speaker to pronounce words clearly. If you have a correctable physical impairment that interferes with effective speech, such as missing teeth, you should consult an appropriate consultant.
- *Misreading:* Mispronunciation may result from a simple mistake, such as reading *amendable* for *amenable, outage* for *outrage, mediation* for *meditation,* or *through* for *though.* If you're a consistent misreader of words, you may have a learning impairment such as dyslexia and related challenges or a problem with your vision; either condition calls for consultation with a specialist.
- *Affectation:* This problem is related to mixing up of different accents in pronouncing a word. For example, some Americans who employ Standard American for nearly all their speech pick up a Briticism here and there, and this practice can be jarring to the listener. Saying EYE'–THUH for *either* works well with the British accent but can sound out of place when used by an American.



Dyslexia: A disorder involving difficulty in learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols.

Unfamiliarity with Correct Pronunciation: Most of us have a reading vocabulary that's far more extensive than our speaking vocabulary. From time to time, we err when we attempt to use a word known to us only through our eyes. The word coup (pronounced KOO), for example, might be pronounced KOOP by one who knew it only from the printed page.

People who have grown up in homes where English was poorly pronounced, or who have learned English as a second language , sometimes must overcome a limited speaking vocabulary and unfamiliarity with correct pronunciation by making a systematic effort to become somewhat of a linguist.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 : Define the terms 'voice culture' and 'pronunciation'.

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Q.2 : What are the main reasons of mispronunciation in presentation?

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ACTIVITY 14.1

Tongue twisters help us in clear articulation. Try some of the traditional tongue twisters provided below:

- Betty bought a bit of butter but the bit of butter was bitter. So Betty bought some better butter to make the bitter butter better.
- She sells sea shells by the sea shore.
- The purple pickle eater put the puppy and puppet on the picture with the pitcher

14.3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF RADIO PRESENTATION

Preparation : The best 'live' programmes are the ones that you have done pre-production work on. Unless you are an experienced live radio presenter you must spend some time preparing your programme before it goes out on air, even the most spontaneous sounding programmes, will have been worked on before they go out. The preparation you do depends on the type of live programme you are presenting. For specific examples see the next section. However, you can do some general preparation work before any programme:

- Make sure that you have a script or running order of some sort - you'll only sound as though you know what you're doing if you **do** know what you're doing!
- If you are using pre-recorded material check that it is all labelled correctly and that you have the relevant cues with the material - this goes for tapes or carts.
- If you need, to copy the running order to the relevant people - you may have a technical person or someone who will be showing any guests in and out.
- Take some paper and a pen to make extra notes if you need to.
- If you're presenting a music programme check you've got all your records/cds or tapes/carts and that they are in the right order.
- If you run advertisements check that you have the right ones and again that they're in the right order.
- Check any pre-recorded tapes you have not recorded yourself, there may be edits to re-do or the piece may be too long.

In the studio



Slouch: To stand, move or sit in a lazy droping way.

- Make sure that you're relaxed and comfortable in the studio, if you have to go to the 'hot seat', that is jump into the chair straight after another presenter. You should be in the studio at least 15 mins before *you're* on air.
- Sit comfortably in the chair, try to relax and don't slouch - all this will affect your voice quality.

- Check that your equipment is switched on and working - if you're taking over from another presenter you can usually assume that everything is ok - unless they say different!
- Check that you have a pair of headphones.

Types of programmes

There are additional preparations you may have to do depending on the type of programme you're presenting. Here are some more examples:

- **Phone-in :** Unless it is an 'open-line' phone -in, where the listeners choose the topic, you should already have decided what you want people to ring in about. You may want to arrange to ring up an 'expert' about the subject to start the calls rolling. Alternatively, pre-advertise the phone-in on the programme before yours (if possible) so that you can fix up the callers. If the topic is a controversial one you will have no problem attracting callers but do have some information to hand in case you have to ad-lib.
- **Chat show :** Try to arrange for your guests to arrive before the day of the programme! As a back up you can have pre-recorded material ready as a stand by item - in case any of your other guests drop out at the last minute. Either record this 'as live' at the time or if it is recorded on location you must make reference to the fact; e.g. "when Jane Freeman was in town last week I managed to catch up with her", or "That was Jane Freeman there talking to me last week before she went on stage." You could also have some music available as a last resort.
- **Discussion programme :** You'll usually be responsible for chairing a discussion so make sure that you've read up about the topic. Invite relevant guests whom you know to be good talkers. You can actually get a good idea of this by seeing how fluently they talk on the phone! If you are going to invite members of the public to phone-in with questions tell your guests before they come onto the programme that you don't want them refusing to answer questions on air. Again, you can usually judge whether the callers are good talkers by how they respond to questioning over the phone.

- **Music programme :** Take more records/cds/tapes into the studio than there are on your running order - unless you've timed accurately all your records you may run short. As you become more experienced you'll be able to judge how much music you'll need. Have bits of information about the music to hand. Many record companies will send out press releases, which tell some interesting facts about the bands; alternatively, you can read the music press to keep you up to date. While you need not necessarily script your links, knowing about the music you're playing helps you to sound interested about it. If you're a specialist music presenter there may be magazines devoted to the music you're playing. Check that.
- **News and current affairs programme :** Check all your facts and information *before* you go out on air, "if in doubt, leave it out", should be your motto.

Programme content

Whatever type of programme you're presenting you must decide beforehand whether the content and style is appropriate for the audience you have. It probably isn't good sense to talk about drug misuse amongst the under 25's when you know that your audience are predominantly over 55 - unless it is an educational programme for parents, and is presented in a language and style that suits the audience. When you're planning a programme here are some things to consider :

- audience
- day
- time of day
- station policy (if any)

Presentation

- Be yourself. You've planned your programme and you're sitting in the chair ready to start the broadcasting. Take a deep breath and relax. If you've done your preparation work you can afford to be quietly confident that things should run smoothly, barring mass equipment failure, of course! Try to forget about other presenters

you may have heard and **be yourself**. Copying another presenter's style is not only difficult but you have to remember that while the 'original version' exists, the listener will only make comparisons - and not always in your favour!

- Try to sit upright, with your back straight - though there's no need to sit to attention! Have the microphone roughly 7" (15 cm) away from your mouth, pointing at your mouth when you look ahead when reading things off the paper hold the paper in front of you at eye level. You will still be talking to the microphone and not mumbling into your chest.
- Once you've started there's no going back; so **think ahead**. Always have something lined up as well as the current item, whether it's a record, cd, tape, cart or another piece of script. You need to be able to come in straight away if things go wrong - otherwise the listener will know you're not paying attention. If you do need to go to the toilet and there's no one else around put a very long record, jingle or tape on!

Common mistakes:

- *Talking too quickly:* When you first start presenting it is natural to be quite nervous and to rush your words. Consciously try to relax, take a deep breath and calm yourself. If you're well prepared, this will also help you to feel - and therefore, sound - more confident and relaxed.
- *Your programme is too complicated or confused:* Perhaps in an effort to be well prepared you've filled your programme with endless facts and bits of information which end up 'bombarding' your listeners. Be clear what you want to say, and plan carefully what the best way is to say it.
- *Your delivery is 'flat' or 'boring':* If you don't sound interested in what you're talking about how can you expect your listeners to be interested? Remember - unlike in a face to face conversation - your **voice** has to carry all the interest, excitement, curiosity of what you're saying. The 'inflections' in your voice also have to travel down the microphone, through the mixer, through the transmitter, across the airwaves, and out to your listener's radio speaker. It is an amazing feat of technology that it makes it at all. But what you do have to keep in mind is that all that travelling tends to 'flatten' the inflections in your speech.

- *Your programme isn't interesting:* Perhaps you've decided it is easy presenting a live programme after all, and only amateurs need to prepare themselves to go on air. If you've nothing planned for your programme, it takes an exceptionally talented presenter to 'ramble' in a way that's interesting to the listeners. Think about your audience; think about their interests; and above all, think about how you can make your programme interesting for **them** (not just for you!).
- *You're talking **at** your listeners rather than **to** them:* Don't lecture the listener, most people find that a big 'turn-off' and that's probably exactly what they'll do! Think of your programme as a structured but easy-going conversation with a person listening. If you can keep a mental picture of someone you're talking to, that will help you find the right 'tone'.
- *You're talking to the listener as if they're sitting amongst a mass of people listening to you:* Most people listen to the radio when they're on their own, or at least alone with their thoughts. Talk as if you're talking to an individual person listening. Don't say things like "ladies and gentlemen", "you out there", or "all you listeners".

Often in the studio you will have to have a running order or cue sheets, these give the timetable of the programme and the script for introducing guests, pre-recorded items or whole programmes respectively. As with all other aspects of radio production the less you leave this to chance the better.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3 : Discuss the kind of preparation required when hosting a radio chat show or a music show.

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Q.4 : What are the common mistakes made in the presentation of radio news programmes?

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14.4 LET US SUM UP

- The process of bringing the voice under control is known as **voice culture**, which involves traditional and scientific methods to improve the quality of voice.
- One aspect of culturing the voice is understanding intonation. This is the rise and fall in pitch, which occurs as we speak. There are various patterns of intonation.
- It is said that voice bears the reflection of one's personality. Therefore, we should try to strive for a better and mature voice quality, which would sound appealing to the listeners.
- The abdominal diaphragmatic breathing (ADB) is the recommended one as thoracic-breathing (TB) results in shallow intakes of air, causing quick uncontrolled exhalation.
- Make sure that you sound like you know what you're talking about.

- Do not think about the millions of people worldwide who may be hearing your story. Think about that ONE person driving home from work and tell your story to him or her. He hears your story in his car-radio.
- Articulation means to utter the vowels with their respective resonant speech. Articulation problems arise from too fast a rate of delivery or from improper placement or faulty use of the articulators (the jaw, the tongue, and the lips).
- Make sure that you're relaxed and comfortable in the studio. If you have to go to the 'hot seat', that is jump into the chair straight after another presenter, you should be in the studio at least 15 minutes before you are on air.
- Check all your facts and information *before* you go out on air, "if in doubt, leave it out", should be your motto.
- During presentation, once you've started there is no going back; so, think ahead.
- Remember - unlike in a face to face conversation - your voice has to carry all the interest, excitement, curiosity of what you're saying.



14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q.No 1. The process of bringing the voice under control is known as voice culture.

Pronunciation means articulating sounds accurately, observing appropriate word stress, pausing at the right places in connected speech.

Ans to Q.No 2. One or more of the following problems can cause mispronunciation:

- *Sloppy or Incorrect Articulation*: If you are guilty of sloppy articulation, you should work extensively with the practice exercises on voice quality and articulation.

- *Physical Impairment:* Missing teeth, a fissure in the upper lip, a cleft palate, nasal blockage, or any degree of facial paralysis may make it impossible for a speaker to pronounce words clearly.
- *Misreading:* Mispronunciation may result from a simple mistake, such as reading *amendable* for *amenable, outage* for *outrage, mediation* for *meditation,* or *through* for *though.*
- *Affectation:* This problem is related to mixing up of different accents in pronouncing a word.
- Unfamiliarity with Correct Pronunciation: Most of us have a reading vocabulary that is far more extensive than our speaking vocabulary.

Ans to Q.No 3 . While presenting a radio chat show you should try to arrange for your guests to arrive before the day of the programme. As a back up you can have pre-recorded material ready as a stand by item - in case any of your other guests drop out at the last minute. Take more records/cds/tapes into the studio than there are on your running order. Have bits of information about the music to hand, many record companies will send out press releases which tell some interesting facts about the bands; alternatively, you can read the music press to keep you up to date. If you're a specialist music presenter there may be magazines devoted to the music you're playing.

Ans to Q.No 4 . The common mistakes made in the presentation of radio news programmes are talking too quickly or filling the programme with endless facts and bits of information which end up 'bombarding' the listeners. Another common mistake is talking at your listeners rather than **to** them. Don't lecture the listener, most people find that a big 'turn-off'. Do not talk to the listener as if they're sitting amongst a mass of people listening to you. Talk as if you're talking to an individual person listening.



14.8 FURTHER READING

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



14.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1. Discuss the importance of voice culture and pronunciation in audio presentation.

Q.2. Discuss the qualities one needs in order to be perfect in radio presentation.

Q.3. What are the preparations needed while presenting phone-in programmes and news and current affairs programmes in radio?