UNIT- 5: PREPARING BROADCAST MATERIAL ON SCIENCE

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Various formats of Radio Programmes

5.4 Various formats of TV Programmes

5.5 Writing for Radio and TV on Science

5.6 Let us Sum up

5.7 Further Readings

5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.9 Possible Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to –

- describe the various formats of radio and television programmes in science
- know about the writing style that should be used on broadcast media for science.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we are going to discuss the various formats of radio and television programmes. The writing style in broadcast media will be given a special focus in this unit which will also give you an insight into the format of writing for broadcast media. This will help you to know and understand what should be the style of writing for the media with special reference to science.

5.3 VARIOUS FORMATS OF RADIO PROGRAMME

5.3.1 News programmes on Science

In this section we will discuss News Programmes on Science which consists of the following:

News:

News provides new information on science and technology or on current scientific events that have happened recently and which are yet to reach the general people.

There are two kinds of news- (a) Hard news and (b) Soft news. Hard news is the reporting of important events that have taken place. Soft news is the news of more informational nature and is not as important as hard news.

However news is not broadcast through commercial FMs and commuity radios except through the All India Radio. The News Services Division (NSD) of All India Radio disseminates news and comments to listeners in India and abroad. Radio news has always been in the forefront in informing and keeping the people abreast about the latest developments taking place in different parts of the country. AIR today puts more than 510 bulletins daily for around 52 hours in 82 languages/dialects in the Home, Regional and External Services.

Out of these, 89 bulletins are broadcast daily from Delhi in the Home Service in English, Hindi and other Indian languages. The 44 Regional News Units (RNUs) put up 355 daily news bulletins in 67 languages. This includes news bulletins mounted exclusively on FM 'Gold' channel from 22 AIR Stations.

In addition to the daily news bulletins, the News Services Division also mounts everyday a number of news-based programmes on topical subjects from Delhi and some other Regional News Units.

Newsreel:

It is a style of news presentation in an extensive way where hard news is broadcast with the help of various news tools, such as eye-witness accounts, extracts of speeches by a leading dignitary reported in the news, sound effect relevant to the sources of the news, talks, commentaries etc. The

daily newsreel of 15 or more minutes duration is a popular form of news broadcasting.

5.3.2 Common science programme formats

Like all other media, in order to draw the attention of the listeners, radio has also devised various appealing 'formats' which are further innovated by creative broadcasters to deliver the content to the best satisfaction of the listeners. These are discussed below :

- **Radio science report**

An event of importance which is required to be reported in more detail is covered under this format. For example, a radio station can broadcast a report on the Indian Science Congress, Indian Science Communication Congress, National Children Science Congress or it may be any other report of important scientific events.

- **Documentary and Science Features**

Documentary is a creative work of non-fiction. Developmental themes, invention or discovery, scientific awareness, events of archival value are normally presented in the format of documentary and features. While documentaries rely on factual records, science features rely on imaginary and emotional creativity with dramatics. It is a format of presentation of programme where all possible radio forms meet, such as voices, sounds, music etc. They combine in an attempt to inform, to move, to entertain or to inspire the listeners. The combination of all of these creates another format which is called 'Docu-feature'

Science Magazine

There are some radio programmes usually of 30 minutes' duration which cannot be grouped elsewhere and which is a combination of various programme such as talks, interviews, on-the-spot reports, eye-witness accounts of scientific events, commentaries etc. Such programmes are called Science Magazines. This programme is usually intended for special audiences.

Science drama

It is a form of audio storytelling broadcast on the radio. With no visual component, science radio drama depends on dialogue, music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the story.

Interview

An interview is a formal/non-formal dialogue, where the interviewer tries to get some information/comment/reaction from the interviewee. Asking the right question in the right way is the crux of a good interview. It requires a lot of research and planning. Questions should be framed to achieve the purpose of the interview. Radio stations usually invite a scientist who discusses on his research and invention or any other issues of scientific relevance.

Science Talks

Talks were the earliest form of spoken-word broadcasting. Radio science talks are neither a lecture nor a public address. It is a straightforward composition - simple, precise friendly chat around a subject on science and technology. It has a clear beginning, a middle and an end. It introduces the scientific subject in an ear-catching way, explains it simply, develops its argument and then summarizes what it has said. A radio science talk avoids complex statistics. Figures are best rounded out to make it easily understood.

Science Discussion

This format is generally used when two or more persons have conflicting view points on an issue of science. The role of the moderator assumes more responsibilities to navigate the flow in such a manner to as avoid irrelevancy keeping in view the time limit.

Feedback/ Vox Pop/ Phone-in

This format is participatory in nature. Replies and/ or listeners' letters fall under this category of feedback. Many developmental activities like use of modern technology, new invention etc. create positive and negative reactions among the common people. Their instant reactions are recorded and aired and in most cases aired live.

'Phone-in' is yet another exciting format in which the listeners directly interact with a radio guest/ expert invited to talk on a matter of public interest. 'Doctor on line' programme of All India Radio, Guwahati is an example of science pone in programme.

There are other formats like variety Invited audience programme, News, Outdoor broadcast (O.B) programme, Special Audience Programme etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What is an Interview?

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Q.2: Where does science discussion take place?

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5.4 VARIOUS FORMATS OF TV PROGRAMMES

If we consider the different kinds of Television science programmes in today's context, then probably the best way to categorise would be to say that there are two broad categories of TV programmes – **news and non-news.** Under science news we have news bulletins and other news-based and current affairs based programmes, say for instance, news magazines, interviews, talks, panel discussions on current topics, news features etc. The non-news category is a much larger category which covers a whole gamut of programmes – science fiction, non-fiction, comedy shows, interactive science programmes etc. Science fiction will mainly consist of drama – soaps and serials, telefilms, teleplays etc. With new age programming, the gap between fiction and non-fiction is fast blurring and many programmes are blends between fiction and non-fiction.

It is not possible to discuss at length each type of TV programme in detail in a single section. So, here we will discuss briefly only one type of programme, i.e., science news and news-based programmes.

Science News

News can be categorised in several types based on different criteria. If we take the location into account, we can say that news can be either **foreign news** or **home news**. Foreign news is on any scientific event that is happening abroad while home news involves something going on in the country from where the news is telecast. For example, a news of NASA is a foreign news and a news of ISRO is a home news.

If we consider the differences in participation of verbal and visual modes, then news can be categorised as **verbal news or read news, audiovisual news and combined news.** Verbal news is read by the news reader, no visuals are present apart from studio setting. Audiovisual news is read by Voice Over. Here dynamic elements of visual mode are in operation. Combined news is a combination of different elements like news reader plus still picture, or Voice Over and map, scheme, diagram covering the whole screen.

News can be categorised as **flash news, extended news, commented or personified news,** and **reportage news.** Flash news is very short, usually read by one voice. No commentary is present here. In extended news there is one institutional and one accessed voice. Institutional voice is usually that of the news reader or news reporter and accessed voice is that of a witness. Commented or personified news is the kind in which the reporter comments on the issue from the location and reportage news is the kind of news which is very dynamic. Investigative camera and reporter are present on location.

Science Report

The difference between science news and science report is that compared to news, the length of a science report is more extensive and also broader in coverage of a scientific issue or event. Usually, after the news reader's abstract of the main information, the reporter reports from the scene, then a third party is interviewed and the reporter provides further insight. The report is always audiovisual.

Science Feature

The third identified genre is feature. It is generally audio-visual and can be of four types: **critical, portrait, occasional, and reflective**. In its content,

specific event, important personal matters or issues are analysed, assessed and generalised. Different from news or report, a feature reconstructs and interprets some known significant event.

Current Affairs Programme

A programme which contains an explanation and analysis of current events and ideas on a scientific issue, including the matters dealing with controversy or with policy is called a current affairs programme. It also includes investigative programmes with contemporary significance. A current affairs programme could be one of the following:

a) ***Science News magazine*** - These are programmes whose aim is to take it beyond where the news was left. Such programmes not only report but also analyze the events.

b) ***Debates*** - Debates are also used to discuss a current event. Generally, the major scientific events are debated by the scientists and science communicator.

c) ***Panel Discussion*** - If an issue is too complex for one person to handle, a panel may be convened so that a group of specialists on the subject matter can speak. Or, it is used when the audience needs to be introduced or exposed to various people or viewpoints at the session.

d) ***Television Interviews -*** Interviews fill a great many hours of every broadcast day. Some are brief, such as 10-second news broadcast actuality and are called sound bites. Others are longer and make up the substance of hour-long talk programmes. Interviewing scientists on an issue, an airplane crash or similar event for news broadcast is only one aspect of news-gathering by reporters. Some interviews are essentially question and answer sessions, often with controversial guests. Many are single-subject interviews on topics such as health care, superstition etc.

5.5 WRITING FOR RADIO AND TV ON SCIENCE

Radio science writing is different from writing for other media. A science script is almost always essential for radio programmes. Radio has the unique

technical character such as strict time limit etc. This calls for a different approach – a different style. Radio science writing is essentially writing for the ear. This is because the listener creates images when listening to a programme. Therefore, writing for radio needs to be as descriptive as possible.

Some rules for writing on science for radio are stated below :

a) Use words which are in everyday use, i.e. the language of talking and are readily understood by the majority of the people.
b) Short and tight sentences to be written
c) Avoid dependent clauses and clumsy inversion
d) Use descriptive style
e) Speech rhythms should be kept in mind when writing radio scripts.
f) Sentences must be easily understandable and should not be too long and winding.
g) Radio should display an element of 'nowness'. Therefore write in present-continuous tense.
h) Put across the idea directly avoiding small details
i) One idea per sentence is the thumb rule.
j) Avoid figures to the decimal point. Round off figures for convenience.
k) Avoid the words, 'Above', 'aforesaid', 'following', 'below', etc.
l) Use simple words. Avoid technical and scientific jargon at all possible times.

Apart from these rules there are other suggestion as stated below :

It should be kept in mind that writing a science story for the electronic media is not the same as writing for print. Those who write for print enjoy some advantages which their broadcast counterparts don't have. For example, a reader can go back and re-read a technical sentence of a scientific invention. If a sentence isn't understood in a TV production, however, the meaning is lost — or worse, the listener or the viewer is distracted while figuring out what was said.

As discussed above, while writing for electronic media you must be very simple and always use active voice. Again, making sure that the most interesting and surprising elements to the forefront of the story, one

should not give away everything right at the beginning. You should maintain the interest by spreading the pieces throughout the story. This mean that try you will not try to let the lead-into the story take away the interest from what follows.

After you write something on a typical story of science, set it aside for at least ten minutes and concentrate on something else. Then go back and review the story with a fresh perspective. At that point, it may be easier to catch and eliminate the unnecessary words and phrases.

One should always remember that in this age of entertainment, the viewers are not much interested on a dull topic of science or technology. So, you must present your story in a more attractive and interesting way. Read the story aloud and if necessary, rewrite the sentences that are too long and use tongue-twisting or awkward phrases, phrases that could be taken two ways, long titles etc.

Don't rely on the sound track to tell the story or explain the video. The basic idea should be obvious from the video. At the same time, the audio and video should complement and strengthen each other. Keep in mind the basic guideline of correlating (relating) audio and video because viewers are accustomed to having what they *see* on the screen relate to what they *hear* — generally in the form of dialogue or narration.



5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit the different formats of both radio and television programmes have been discussed. There is a discussion on the specific style of writing which should be used for these media especially with a scientific content. For this type of writing one should keep certain rules in mind like one should use words which are in everyday use, sentences should be short and tight, descriptive style should be used. The speech rhythms should be kept in mind while writing radio scripts, the sentences must be easily understandable and simple words should be used. In this form of writing technical and scientific jargon should be avoided.



5.7 FURTER READING

- **Wilson, Anthony (1999). Handbook of Science Communication. London :** IOP Publishing Limited.



5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. No. 1: An interview is a formal/non-formal dialogue, where the interviewer tries to get some information/comment/reaction from the interviewee. Asking the right question in the right way is the crux of a good interview. It requires a lot of research and planning. Questions should be framed to achieve the purpose of the interview. Radio stations usually invite a scientist and discuss on his research and invention or any other issues of scientific relevance.

Ans to Q. No. 2: This format is generally used when two or more persons have conflicting view points on an issue of science. The role of moderator assumes more responsibilities to navigate the flow in such a manner as to avoid irrelevancy keeping in view the time limit.



5.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q.1: What are the various television formats? Illustrate your answer.

Q.2: Write short note on:

a. Panel Discussion
b. Science Feature
c. Science Talks

Q.3: What are the various formats of a radio programme?

Q.4: State some rules for writing on science for radio broadcast.

Q.5: Write a note on the common science programme formats.

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