Unit 41: News Production for Radio

“It’s not what you say it’s the way you say it.”

Yasmin Dolman

In some radio stations there is a difference between the styles of how they broadcast the news. This can depend on many different factors, including tone, clarity and different styles.

Getting the tone right is more important than you may think. In terms of bad English, the majority of listeners would not be offended or even notice it. However, there will always be listeners who won’t appreciate it and complain.

Clarity and accessibility are the fundamentals. A radio station must say what they have to say in a simple and direct way as possible, without compromising the essential details. Sentence structure should be simple and plain. Anything which is poorly expressed will put off and confuse listeners.

Different radio stations will have different styles in order to appeal to their target audience. Looking at BBC Radio 1 and BBC Radio 4 there is an obvious difference in the language, presenter, accent and construction of the bulletin. The presenter on BBC Radio 1 uses simple and straightforward language that is more ‘common’. For example, instead of saying “sentenced to five years in prison”, Radio 1 might say, “sent down for five years”. Using language like this will appeal to the audience as they can relate to the language, which will be used in their vocabulary, as the audience is 16-25. The presenter is young as it is used to match the target audience as they wouldn’t want to hear someone who is from the older generation. They also use a variety of different voices to keep their target audience more focused. The presenter of BBC Radio 4 uses more complicated and formal language than BBC Radio 1. BBC Radio 1 is in the style of a wrap using news packages making the news section of the show 7 minutes long, meaning that there will be lots of news information and audio to get across to the listeners. A wrap is where the main newsreader gives the main facts from the news story and then it cutes to an audio clip of an interview. Afterwards, the newsreader continues to talk about the subject. A wrap is done for bigger stories that contain more facts.

Depending on what type of broadcaster the radio station is, the news style will vary.

Public Service: A public service radio is funded by the British public using their TV license fees. A public service radio station will have to relate to a wider audience of different ages and interests. Because everyone is paying for these radio stations, they cannot be biased and must be politically fair. An example of a public service radio station is BBC Radio One. The BBC is funded by British TV licenses and have a large number of reporters and journalists.

Commercial: A commercial radio is funded by the advertisements that are played throughout. As they are funded by these companies and organisations, they also have to be unbiased and must not offend any of the people who fund the station. Being commercial, there may be less journalists to cover news stories, therefore the news will be shorter and more likely to be a bulletin. An example of a commercial radio station is XFM, when listening to this radio station there is a lot of advertisement breaks.

Community: A community radio station is for a small group of people where the stories featured on that station will mainly be local. Either the council or commercials fund this type of station. Being a community radio station they will only cover news stories about the local community as they aren’t as big as radio’s such as BBC and have a much smaller audience. The disadvantages to being a community radio is that they will get fewer interviews and less professionally trained journalists, therefore the news may not be up to par. An example of a community radio station is 97.5 Kemet Fm. This radio station is based in Nottingham and the news stories broadcasted are all about the local community.

Small Scale: A small-scale radio station is a radio for places like: college, university or hospital and is funded by local advertisers or the institution that set up the station. As the station is for a specific region the news will be specific and relevant to the place. Being small scale there will not be as many larger news stories with interviews. The studio will not have the same facilities that a large radio station like BBC will have. There will also be less people employed. An example of a small-scale radio station is 2NUR FM, which is played at Newcastle University. It relies on support from the community it serves.

Local, Regional and National: A local radio station will be broadcasted to the local area and broadcast national and local news. An example of this would be BBC radio Manchester. A regional station broadcasts in a larger area, these areas include: North West, Yorkshire, North East and so on. An example of a regional radio station is Real Radio as they have specific stations for the regions. A national radio station covers news from a national and international base. They will not just broadcast local news as that wont be relevant to everyone who is listening. An example of a national radio station is Absolute Radio as they cover news from a national view.

There are two types of audiences that radio stations must try to appeal to when broadcasting news.

Secondary: A secondary audience to a radio station is when the listener is tuned in to that station not out of choice. For example, if you are in a car with someone and you choose to listen to Radio 1, the other person is the secondary audience as they did not choose that station.

Tertiary: A tertiary audience within radio is when someone is listening to that radio station as a one off. This could be for many reasons, for example their favourite celebrity is a guest on the show or someone has recommended the show to them.

In the radio industry there are many rules which are set out in order to lessen the chance of any legal or ethical issues being committed. For example, back in 2013 an incident occurred within the radio network, when two Australian DJ’s rang up a hospital pretending to be Prince Phillip and asked how Kate Middleton’s baby was. The woman who answered began to give out information about Kate not realising that the conversation was being broadcasted to thousands of people. The lady did not know this was a prank and therefore felt like it was her fault and ended it by committing suicide. This was a massive story in the media and was the front cover of newspapers for a couple of weeks.

The prank that was carried out by the Australian DJ’s was not in fact illegal and they had not committed a criminal offense.

In radio there are legal and ethical rules on privacy. These are mainly:

* Provide accurate news
* Treat replies generously
* Respect individual privacy
* Exercise care in the use of pictures
* Listen to both sides
* Be cautious in publishing names
* Securing rights to music
* Defamation & contempt of court