

Topic # 3

Interviewing for radio

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The radio interview

Summary:

- 1) Definition
- 2) Types
- 3) How to do them

Definition of the radio interview

This is a model of representation of reality based on conversation between a journalist and a relevant person because of his knowledge, opinions or personality, in order to interpret a new reality for the audience

The radio interview

Why is it so suitable for radio?

- 1) It is very persuasive
- 2) The respondent expresses himself in a very natural way
- 3) It is more expressive
- 4) It is very easy to listen to and follow
- 5) The listener can access the primary source of information without journalist mediation

Types of radio interview

- According to the content
 - Statements interview
 - Personality interview
- According to the structure
 - Conversational
 - Interrogative
- According to the kind of broadcasting
 - Live
 - Recorded
- According to the communicative situation
 - In situ (face to face)
 - At the radio studio
 - Where the action takes place
 - At distance: by telephone

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

According to the content

1) Statement interview

- The most important is the what- the content
- Commonly used to complete a piece of news

2) Personal interview

- The most important is the who- who says it
- It collects data related to the character of the interviewee
- It is not true that only celebrities can give interesting personal interviews

According to the structure

1) Conversational

- It follows the structure of a conversation with questions and comments
- It requires special skills from the interviewer to
 - listen to the answers and
 - improvise and address once again with further questioning
- Advantages:
 - 1) The result is more natural and
 - 2) It allows the listener's attention to be better retained

According to the structure

2) Interrogative

- It follows the scheme of question and answer and is used like a game in long interviews to energize and give more rhythm to some parts of the interview
- Different ways: a test, a word and the first thing that comes to interviewee's mind, a choice between 2 alternatives, etc.
- Answers **MUST BE** brief

According to the kind of broadcasting

1) Live

- Interview is broadcasted and received at the same time
- No chance for editing
- It is more challenging but more natural and spontaneous
- The most difficult part is to control the time
- To deal with the risk of not being able to count on the interviewee, it is advisable to have some extra material to fill this space

According to the kind of broadcasting

2) Recorded

- The interview is broadcasted at one time and received later
- Chance for editing
- This is not always necessary, but may be very useful:
 - if answers are very long, or
 - if answers are not very interesting and we need to save time

According to the communicative situation

1) In situ (face to face)

- At the radio studio
 - » Better for the interviewer but worse for the interviewee
- Where the action takes place
 - » Better for the interviewer but worse for the interviewee

2) At distance: by telephone

Advantages: it saves on distances and is calming for some interviewees

Disadvantages: sound quality is worse and it is always possible to lose communication

How to do radio interviews: main stages

- 1) Need for interview objective and justification
- 2) Documentation and composing of the script
- 3) New contact with the interviewee
- 4) Conducting the interview
- 5) Final evaluation of the work

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

1) Need for interview objective and justification

Steps:

- a) Choice of topic and aim
- b) Choice of the type of interview
- c) Choice and first contact with the interviewee

a) Choice of the topic and aim

- Both should be feasible
- Be aware of the time
- After choosing the topic, we should determine the aim: we should know where we would like to go
- If the aim is clear, the interview will be well determined and structured

b) Choice of the type of interview

- It depends very much on the aim of the interview
 - Ex1: Interview of Mariano Rajoy about his personal life and professional career: personal interview, recorded in his home
 - Ex2: Interview about the current political situation: statement interview, live and at the radio studio

c) Choice and first contact with the interviewee

- The aim is to get the interview
- Journalists should be humble, convincing and friendly
- In this first contact: aim, length, date, time and conditions
- This first contact is very useful to:
 - Determine the kind of interviewee: dominant, shy, specialized, or common
 - Discover his knowledge
 - Discover his communication skills

2) Documentation and composing of the script

a) Documentation

b) Structuring the interview

c) Composing question

a) Documentation

- Why is it so important? Because of RESPECT and also
 - because otherwise the respondent may realize that we have not prepared the interview
 - because the result is much more interesting and original
 - because the interviewer can go deeper into the issues
 - because trying to fool the interviewer will be harder
 - On the importance of doing research see also this [video](#)
 - Ex: “[How not to start an interview](#)” (video)
- Everything is allowed:
 - newspapers, magazines, Internet, libraries, talking to interviewee’s friends , enemies, coworkers, family, Facebook or Twitter accounts, etc.

b) Structuring the interview

- There are 3 main parts
- **Opening:**
 - Has to grab the attention of the listener and prepare audience for what is coming up
 - Must be original, appealing, brief (40") and direct
 - Things to mention: aim (what for), justification (why) and the interviewee (who)
- **Body:** from the first question to the last answer
- **Closing:** the interviewer thanks his guest and says goodbye (20")

b) Structuring the interview

- Some good examples of good radio interview structures:
 - [Interview with Sherry Turkle, author of "Alone Together"](#)
 - [Interview with Nathan Wolf, a scientist that tracks viruses before they spread](#)
 - [Interview with David Johnston, author of "Fine print" book](#)
 - [Interview with Steve Martin, actor](#)

c) Composing question

- There are different kind of questions:
 - 1) According to the possibilities of answer
 - Open: the respondent broadly answers in his own words. They usually correspond to the 5 ws and the how
 - Closed: they offer few possible answers (yes or no); faster but can be biased
 - 2) According to the content of the questions
 - General
 - Specific

Some tips about the questions

- Requirements
- Some guidelines to pose questions
- Order of the questions

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

Requirements of the questions

- All the questions must be:
 - 1) Clear and simple
 - 2) Direct
 - 3) Brief
 - 4) Specific
- Let's see some examples...

Requirements of the questions

1) Clear and simple

- It is very important that they don't generate misunderstanding
- NOT: "Why did you decide to not come back when you were asked to return when you knew about the serious situation of your wife?"

Requirements of the questions

2) Direct: strict “to the point”!

NOT: "Well, I know that this question can bother you because sometimes others have asked it to you and you have not answered, but maybe this time we can ask it, so if you wouldn't mind we would like to know ... "

Requirements of the questions

3) Brief

- The longer the question, the harder it is to respond to it
- NOT: “Mr. Sanchez, what has been agreed on regarding garbage collection, given the position in recent months expressed by the main opposition party on a matter considered scandalous and which has given rise to several protests about a possible increase in the already expensive service?”

Requirements of the questions

4) Specific

- Can't induce such extensive answers that the listeners end up bored
- The answers have to take less than 2 minutes, because after that time attention lapses
- NOT: "Mr. Aznar, what is your assessment of the 8 years that you were Prime minister?"
- It would take a week or more....

Requirements of the questions

To sum up, all the questions must be:

- 1) Clear and simple
- 2) Direct
- 3) Brief
- 4) Specific

Some guidelines to pose questions

1) Don't pose 2 questions in a single turn

The interviewee normally answer one: the most comfortable one

2) Questions don't have to include the answer

Because they determine the response of the interviewee that may answer something different

Some guidelines to pose questions

3) Closed questions should be saved just for some specific moments

NOT:

Q: Do you like football?

A: Yes

Q. Why?

A: Because

BETTER:

Q: Why do you like football?

A. Because

Some guidelines to pose questions

4) Don't ask for external opinions

Specially with hostile interviewees

The interviewee may answer “Ask him!”

NOT:

Q: Would you count on Luis' support..?

A: I don't know, ask Luis

Some guidelines to pose questions

5) Try always to ask for the “whys”

They are usually very important and they require the interviewees think

6) Interviewers should never express their views

That is not their mission

The opinions that matter are the interviewee's

NOT: It is indeed embarrassing that he has changed his mind that way, don't you think?

Some guidelines to pose questions

7) Ask with content

Avoid those questions that anyone can ask and that show that the interviewer has hardly prepared the interview

NOT: “Mr. Minister, what do you have to say to our audience?”

Some guidelines to pose questions

8) Avoid pre schemes

Avoid always asking about the same thing

Ex: In any scheduled event:

- a) What is the purpose of his work, his book or his performance?
- b) What did you want to express with your work, book or painting?
- c) How did the idea come to you?

Some guidelines to pose questions

8) Avoid pre schemes

- Sometimes they are useful to save time, but when overused, they show little preparation
- Each situation requires a different preparation

Some guidelines to pose questions

9) Combine questions with comments

- Not only questions and not only comments
- By mixing both, interview will be more fluent

10) Vary the structure of the questions

– NOT:

- Q1: What do you think about the new law?
- Q2: And, what do you think of the party spokesman's statements?
- Q3. And, what do you think about...?

– The interview will be monotonous

Some guidelines to pose questions

11) Avoid the expression “one question”

- Or “the next question” or “I would like to ask you”
- It is better not to waste much time with obvious statements
- In radio, time is essential

12) Avoid also the expression “lastly”

- It is very common that something else will come up, so the “last” thing is not really the last thing

For greater diversity...

It is good to mix questions and comments with other elements such as music the interviewee likes, friend's comments, questions from other people, listener questions, etc.

Order of the questions

- Depends on the topic and on the interviewee
- There are 2 main forms:
 - 1) THEMATIC order: questions are structured in terms of sub items that divide the interview
 - 2) CHRONOLOGICAL order: questions are presented in a chronological order

3) New contact with the interviewee

- 10 minutes before starting the interview
- It is useful to:
 - Reassure the interviewee
 - Compare the latest data
 - Finalize some issues that are going to be dealt with

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

4) Conduction of the interview

- a) Placement
- b) Attitude
- c) What should and should not be done

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

a) placement

- At respondent's home:
 - Try to find a quiet place without much noise
- At the radio studio:
 - Reassure the interviewee. Tell him/her how to stand, how far to be from the microphone, what the headphones are for...

b) attitude

a) Humility

b) [Be empathetic](#)

c) Try not to lose your temper

d) The interviewer is just a medium

e) Try to maintain a pleasant physical appearance

See also “[Introduction to interviewing](#)”
(video on general tips when interviewing)

c) what should NOT be done

- Do NOT:
 - Make sounds of agreement or disagreement
 - Stop listening
 - Forget the listener
 - Cut off the interviewee
 - Give clues about what we think
 - Avoid complicated questions
 - Forget good manners
 - Annotate final considerations

c) what should be done

- DO:
 - Listen
 - Ex: [Larry King interviews Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#)
 - Remember who the respondent is
 - Prepare a good questionnaire
 - Observe the interviewee
 - Take note of the main data
 - Insist if the interviewee is trying to avoid difficult questions

About the cross exam: what should be done

- Asking again is recommended in the following cases:
 - If the answer is unclear
 - If the answer is incomplete
 - If the statement is false or misleading
 - If the answer is very complex
 - If some technical terminology is included and is hard to follow and understand
 - If mentioned people are absent
 - If quoted authors are not sufficiently explained

(Source: [Pérez Cotten and Tello](#), 2004)

About the cross exam: what should NOT be done

However, there are 2 threats:

- Asking something that was already answered again. Obviously, this is the result of not having listened
- Asking out of turn. This is also very common. The worse thing one can do is interrupting an argument. This happens because journalists do not listen, or listen but are very rude, or both, and just think about the interview as a way to show off

(Source: [Pérez Cotten and Tello](#), 2004)

4) what if he lies?

- We must assess the seriousness of the lie
 - A) If it is not important and does not affect the essence, let it go
 - B) If it is very important, try to contradict the respondent by providing documentation
- NEVER correct someone if you are not able to prove with data that he lied

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

Some more advice before starting

- Once the interview is over, it is advisable to briefly chat with the interviewee
- This exchange of views can facilitate further work
- The interviewee can tell us about any mistake or misunderstanding during the interview
- Besides, it is always advisable to be on good terms with the interviewees
- It is time to thank him for the interview and to say goodbye
- It is a final gesture of courtesy that many really appreciate

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

5) Final evaluation of the work

- It is always advisable to evaluate the final work. In particular, we should check to see if the respondent felt COMFORTABLE
- Why?
 - Because of the ability of the professional
 - Because of the relevance of the questions and comments or
 - simply because of an indulgent attitude toward the interviewee

(Source: [Roderio, 2001](#))

5) Final evaluation of the work

2) If the guest felt UNCOMFORTABLE. Why?

- a) Because he does not trust the professionalism of the interviewer
- b) Because the questions were relevant
- c) Because of the knowledge that journalist had of the topic and the inability of the respondent to sneak in controversial issues
- d) Because of the discussed items ("uncomfortable issues")
- e) Because of the tone of the questions

(Source: [Rodero, 2001](#))

As always, it is all about PRACTICE, PRACTICE
and MORE PRACTICE!

The END

Thank you very much for your attention