

Topic # 4

The radio feature

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Summary:

- 1) definition of the radio feature
- 2) characteristics of the radio feature
- 3) structure of the radio feature
- 4) types of radio feature
- 5) how to produce radio features
- 6) threats to avoid when producing radio features
- 7) required skills for producing radio features

Before starting...

- Some examples of good radio features:
 - [A New Generation Of App Developers](#)
 - [Fighting Childhood Obesity: It's A Family Affair](#)
 - [Got Arthritis? Exercise Can Help](#)
 - [Teen Study: Social Media Is Positive Experience](#)
 - [Addressing The Shortage Of Women In Silicon Valley](#)
 - [New School Year Brings Tough Lessons In Spain](#)
 - [Distracted Driving: We're All Guilty, So What Should We Do About It?](#)

Before starting...

- Some examples of good radio features:
 - [Struggle For Smarts? How Eastern And Western Cultures Tackle Learning](#)
 - [Opportunities Emerge For Vets In Tough Job Market](#)
 - [London's Classic Cabs May Be Driven To Extinction](#)
 - [Experimental Malaria Vaccine Disappoints, But Work Continues](#)
 - [To Get Around Tax Hike, Spanish Theater Sells Carrots, Not Tickets](#)
 - [Spaniards Take To Streets To Block Home Evictions](#)

Definition of the radio feature

Model of representation of reality, based on monologue, that attempts to narrate and describe events and actions, providing a broad context in content, a rich and varied use of sources in production, and a careful and creative aesthetic construction

Characteristics

- 1) Regarding its content
- 2) Regarding its stylistic resources
- 3) Regarding its production
- 4) Regarding its integration into programming

Regarding its content

- 1) informative attitude
- 2) certain connection to current issues
- 3) descriptive and narrative character
- 4) greater depth
- 5) factual inspiration
- 6) high thematic versatility

Regarding its content

1) informative attitude

- The feature primarily aims to inform
- It can inform on an event, an action or a statement
- However, this informative purpose is always at the core of the genre

Regarding its content

2) certain connection to current issues

- The connection to current issues exists, although it is not as urgent, immediate and compelling as in news or reports
- In turn, features gain in depth

Regarding its content

- 3) narrative and descriptive character
- As for the kind of speech, features include at the same time narration and description
- Narration refers to the linguistic representation of people, situations and circumstances in time
- This narrative condition is mostly assumed by the word
- For example, stories dealing with facts that are casual and spontaneous

Regarding its content

3) narrative and descriptive character

- There are other features that mostly include description
- These features try to make material things visible by explaining their appearance and external form
- In radio, the description is very important, as there is no image
- This description is usually carried out through word but also music and sound effects

Regarding its content

4) greater depth

- The feature does not merely describe and narrate the essence of the news
- Once known, they provide greater depth
- This is possible through research and it's what allows journalists to interpret the facts, contextualize them, offer a greater perspective and place the information into a larger perspective

Regarding its content

4) greater depth

- Reporter's responsibility is greater than the news writer
- His /her aim is to go further
- How? By searching for more documentation, finding out the causes, questioning more sources, inquiring about the consequences, asking about similar cases, ensuring that the voices are those of experts, learning the opposing view, looking for the number of those affected, seeking their testimonies, analyzing possible solutions, etc

Regarding its content

5) factual inspiration

- Features deal mostly with facts
- These facts are
 - i) Real and objective
 - ii) Different from opinions
- Features may use literary fiction techniques, but the content must be real and not a product of of the reporter's imagination.
- The narrator is “a slave to reality”(Gabriel García Márquez)

Regarding its content

6) high thematic versatility

- The feature is a very free genre and can refer to any issue: there are no limits
- However, since they require some investment of time and money they normally refer to some specific issues, such as:
 - new trends
 - emerging phenomena
 - important events
 - social issues
 - controversial situations, or
 - new procedures

Regarding its stylistic resources

- They refer to the form
- These characteristics are important because in features the aesthetic dimension is much appreciated
- These characteristics include:
 - 1) originality
 - 2) personal style
 - 3) great structural freedom
 - 4) diversity of expressive resources
 - 5) presentation through monologue

Regarding its stylistic resources

1) originality

- Every feature wants to be original, new, different, and unique
- This uniqueness extends from the content to, especially, the form
- Regarding the content, features may be original because of the topic they refer to, or also because of the approach or point of view
- Regarding the form, originality may refer to the type of narrator, the use of radio language or to the treatment of space and time

Regarding its stylistic resources

2) personal style

- The author takes part in the text in several ways:
 - choosing the topic
 - selecting the most suitable genres
 - choosing different sources
 - structuring the text
 - choosing the verbs, adverbs, adjectives, images or metaphors and
 - combining the different elements of radio language

Regarding its stylistic resources

- 2) personal style
- Still, there are always three limits:
 - Everything must be conditional on the informative purpose of the feature
 - The author always remains in the background
 - The style is subordinate to the required clarity of any radio genre

Regarding its stylistic resources

3) great structural freedom

- Much of the freedom of the reporter is used to structure the text, to organize the material he/she has collected in the most orderly and consistent way
- There are different possibilities for structuring a feature
- At any rate, all features include a minimal structure in three parts: opening, development and closure
- Each of these parts always has the same function
- Once these parts are established, there are again many possibilities when drafting them
- This gives rise to different types of openings, bodies and closings

Regarding its stylistic resources

4) diversity of expressive resources

- Features allow for a great variety and intensification of expressive resources
- This variety has many aspects. The most important are:
 - Variety in the use of the sources
 - Variety in the use of testimonies
 - Variety in the use of the genres
 - Variety in the use of the elements of the radio language
 - Ex: [Scenes from a Struggle with Parkinson's Disease](#)
 - Variety in the use of links
 - Variety in the treatment of space and time

Regarding its stylistic resources

5) presentation through monologue

- Feature is a type of speech spoken entirely by one person
- Monologue genres are suitable for radio as long as they are brief
- In order to grab the listener attention, it sometimes includes other voices
- Features are still monologue genre because the dialogue is used only for aesthetic purposes, and without an interactive value

Regarding its production

- This refers to the way of producing a radio feature
- These characteristics are:
 - 1) recorded broadcasting
 - 2) variable length
 - 3) broadcasted from the station

Regarding its production

1) recorded broadcasting

- Features are normally recorded
- This allows for editing and reduces risks
- Other times they are live, especially the so-called street features
- There is a third possibility: main broadcasting live with some recorded pieces

Regarding its production

2) variable length

- The length of features is normally quite variable and it is conditional on the topic, approach, kind and destiny of the text
- The simplest ones: 2 or 3 minutes
- The research features: up to 30 minutes
- However, it is not recommended that the feature be overlong

Regarding its production

3) broadcasted from the station

- Unlike reports, features are broadcasted from the station
- This allows a greater perspective and more access to expressive resources
- The street features are broadcasted from the scene.
- In these cases, the journalist seem more like a witness, as in reports
- Nevertheless, the first modality is more common

Regarding its integration into programming

- This refers to the integration of the feature into the programming offered by the station
- These characteristics include:
 - 1) little presence in the programming
 - 2) informative location

Regarding its integration into programming

1) little presence in programming

- Despite its high thematic and aesthetic versatility, the feature is an uncommon genre in radio
- The reasons are:
 - It requires more time and money to be produced
 - Radio features have been somewhat eclipsed by TV features
 - When they appear in radio, their frequency is irregular

Regarding its integration into programming

2) informative location

- Features are normally located in informative programs
- Especially in:
 - Main informative programs
 - Special informative programs and
 - As autonomous programs

Structure of the radio feature

- Feature provides journalists great freedom to structure their texts
- Therefore, there are no fixed and rigid structures
- Still, most features include a three-parts-structure:
 - a) OPENING: it focuses the topic and grasps the listener's attention
 - b) BODY: it provides most of the information
 - c) CLOSING: it reinforces the main idea

The opening

- It has two functions:
 - i) to grasp the listener's attention, and
 - ii) to prepare him before offering the main content
- Since it involves the first contact, it must be very clear
- It is very important because a good start is “more than the half of the way”

The opening

- For this reason, it has to meet certain requirements:
 - SIMPLE: must be very understandable
 - RELEVANT: able to grasp the essence of the story
 - INTERESTING by itself
 - COLORFUL and original, also because of the language used
 - INTRIGUING: able to generate excitement

The opening

- There are different formulas:
 - Posing a new aspect (like news)
 - Posing a new approach for a known aspect
 - Stirring interest by providing anecdotes or style

The opening: types i

- summary
- narrative
- descriptive
- contrast
- posing a question
- direct appeal
- with a quote
- deductive
- parody based
- thriller based
- symbolic
- case oriented

The body

- It is the most extensive part
- It contains a lot of information
- The challenge when producing it is to gradually provide the information so that the text is attractive and has rhythm

The body: tips

- Have a narrator who firmly links the different parts
- Include summaries and lists, but which are not too long
- Pay close attention to the transitions and links
- Provide the greatest quantity and quality of testimonies and audios
- Respect the source attribution
- Provide details and anecdotes to dynamize the story
- Take special care with the writing for radio

The body: types

- block-structured
- chronological
- dialectical
- scene-structured
- case-structured

The closing

- It is the final part
- It is very important because radio is an ephemeral medium and the listener tends to stick with it until the end
- Therefore, texts should not be "hanging" or finished in a rush
- Listeners must have the feeling that the story is over and concluded

The closing

- Requirements:
 - BRIEF: No time for new data
 - CONCLUSIVE: must be the logical end of the road and provide us with the conclusion
 - PHASE: must maintain a link with the last part of the development
 - ORIGINAL: as befits a text that aims to be original
 - LOGICAL and consistent with the preceding text

The closing

- There are different options for elaborating it:
 - Summarizing the main content
 - Offering a proposal
 - Encouraging action

The closing: types

- return
- conclusive
- case-oriented
- moral-oriented
- calling to action
- with a question
- future oriented
- anticlimatic

Types of radio features

- Criteria:

- 1) According to the broadcasting
- 2) According to the depth
- 3) According to the place where the reporter is located
- 4) According to the content

Types of radio features

- According to the broadcasting
 - Live
 - Recorded
 - Blended

Types of radio features

- Live:
 - The feature is broadcasted and received at the same time
 - No chance of editing
 - It is more demanding
 - However, the style is more direct
 - It is commonly used in 2 cases: to complement a current event and to cover major events

Types of radio features

- Recorded:
 - The feature is broadcasted once and received afterwards
 - This means 2 things:
 - greater perspective and
 - the possibility of editing
 - The style is not as fresh as in live features
 - In turn, it is a more finished text in terms of interpretation and also aesthetic

Types of radio features

- Blended:
 - The basic story is live broadcasted, but some parts have been recorded
 - These pieces have a limited duration and they allow a further intensification of the expressive resources
 - This treatment is very suitable for special programs
 - Its biggest advantage is that it adds the freshness of live coverage to the more aesthetic care of recorded broadcasts

Types of radio features

- According to the depth:
 - Elementary feature
 - Documentary feature
 - Research feature

Types of radio features

- Elementary feature:
 - It is not very in depth in terms of interpretation
 - Sometimes it just includes the story + antecedents and consequences + testimonies of experts and people involved
 - It requires less research, documentation, time and money
 - It may be produced by just one reporter
 - It is short (3 or 4 minutes)
 - Its treatment is very simple
 - It can't be an autonomous program

Types of radio features

- Documentary feature:
 - It goes more in-depth
 - It includes more research, documentation, time and money
 - It may be prepared by one or two reporters
 - It takes longer (6 or 7 minutes)
 - Its formal treatment is also more complex
 - It can't be an autonomous program

Types of radio features

- Research feature:
 - It is most in depth in terms of interpretation
 - It requires more research, documentation, time and money
 - It requires more reporters
 - It takes longer (30 minutes)
 - Its formal treatment is also more complex
 - It can be an autonomous program

Types of radio features

- Research feature:
 - The most difficult task is finding a structure that allows the listener's attention to be grabbed again
 - To do so, the most common strategies are:
 - providing the main steps to get the information
 - chronologically presenting the order in which events took place
 - contrasting the different stories

Types of radio features

- Research feature:
 - There are also 2 resources that can help lead to a more attractive result:
 - including the “human element”, and
 - dramatizing some parts

Types of radio features

- According to the place where the reporter is located:
 - Street feature
 - Newsroom feature

Types of radio features

- Street feature:
 - The reporter is on the street, attending to the events as they occur.
 - His intervention takes place through a microphone or through a mobile phone
 - The attitude is mostly informative
 - It is very connected to current events
 - Limited depth
 - Little intensification of expressive resources
 - It is an urgent and sometimes improvised story

Types of radio features

- Newsroom feature
 - The reporter is at the station
 - The facts are closed and known by the audience
 - Now what is needed is to delve into and investigate the facts to find new and revealing aspects
 - The attitude is mostly interpretative
 - This feature is less connected to current issues
 - It is deeper in terms of interpretation because reporters count on more perspective
 - Intensification of expressive resources is also increased
 - It refers to a less "urgent" and improvised story
 - The structure is more defined
 - The style is more literary

Types of radio features

- According to the content:
 - Facts
 - Actions
 - Statements
- These modalities are not usually presented “in pure”
- Most features actually combine these 3 elements

Types of radio features

- Fact feature:
 - FACTS: Events that occur by chance, unexpectedly and without any previous or deliberate action
 - The scheme would be "something happened"
 - E.g : an earthquake, an accident, the eruption of a volcano, almost all natural phenomena
 - The attitude is mostly informative
 - This feature is very connected to current issues

Types of radio features

- Actions feature:
 - ACTIONS: Prepared and premeditated activities, for which there is a previous and intentional performance
 - The scheme here would be: "someone did something"
 - This feature is more planned, which implies a certain reduction of the colloquial style

Types of radio features

- Statements features:
 - STATEMENTS: versions of people involved in the story, from experts to witnesses and victims
 - The scheme here would be: “somebody said something”
 - Statements may be broadcasted in direct (with audio) or reported speech
 - Generally, direct style is more attractive for radio, and therefore more appropriate

How to produce radio features

- It seems difficult to provide some fixed guidelines, because the feature is a very free genre
- Nevertheless, a procedure with the following 8 steps can always be established (Ulibarri, 1994):
 - the idea
 - the purpose
 - the approach
 - the research
 - the selection
 - the reasoning
 - the production and
 - the presentation

How to produce radio features: the idea

- It corresponds to the topic that our story will cover- its content
- Everything can be a topic for an article, although usually they are issues such as new trends, emerging phenomena, important events, social issues, controversial situations, new procedures, etc.
- But potentially, everything can be a topic for an article
- In the final choice, some things must be taken into account:
 - Human interest
 - The viability of the topic
 - The expressive possibilities of the topic

How to produce radio features: the purpose

- This is the aim of the feature-its purpose, what we want to get from it: the *what for*
- Examples:
 - To show the human side of a celebrity
 - To present the main differences between two points of view
 - To show a contradiction, an irony, or a paradox
 - To illustrate the day to day of a situation
 - To present the causes of a problem
 - To point out t possible consequences
 - To expose the "human cost" of a situation, phenomenon or problem
 - To show the difficulties of carrying out a procedure

How to produce radio features: the purpose

- The purpose conditions the first decisions:
 - the length
 - the tone
 - the documentation to review
 - the people to interview
 - who will be there
 - possible music

How to produce radio features: the approach

- It has to do with thinking how to get what we want:
 - a) how to show the human side of a celebrity
 - b) how to show irony, contradiction or paradox
 - c) where should we focus, etc.
- Normally this is the main difference between features: rather than new issues, journalists tend to provide new approaches to issues that have already been dealt with

How to produce radio features: the approach

- To choose an approach, 6 basic journalistic dimensions may be taken into account:
 - The story
 - The reach
 - The causes
 - The consequences
 - The counterflow and
 - The future
- It is not necessary to address all these dimensions, but to choose 1 or 2 and develop them

How to produce radio features: the approach

- In their approaches, journalists should always try to focus their texts on HUMAN INTEREST
- The idea is to humanize the dimensions of what it described
- Thus, they can bring the content closer to the audience

How to produce radio features: the research

- Here journalists have to find the information they need for their features
- Research is increasingly specific
- Journalists have to take into account the credibility, attitude and interest of the sources they talk to
- In addition to interviews with sources, journalists should also review literature on the subject, surveys, physical documentation, etc.
- However, they can't forget the need to "translate" these materials to sounds ([“show, don't tell”](#))

How to produce radio features: the selection

- When choosing among all the material journalists have, they have to be very selective and act in a conscious and the most objective way.
- A possible order for selection might be:
 - Reviewing all the material to have a global vision
 - Identifying the essential elements to support the feature
 - Identifying the accessories and parts and seeing what we do with them
 - Identifying the elements that reinforce the essence of the feature
 - Also selecting the elements that can be used as anecdotes or to provide color and originality to the final text
- At this point, journalists must also decide between the rest of the elements of the radio language: music, effects, silences...

How to produce radio features: the reasoning

- After selecting the material, journalists have to think about its meaning
- They need to find out:
 - possible relationships or lack of them between the elements they have
 - similarities and differences between the case study and others
 - its uniqueness

How to produce radio features: the reasoning

- To this end, journalists make inferences to speculate about the unknown, based on the already known
- There are three common procedures to infer:
 - EXTRAPOLATION: going beyond data assuming that the trend will remain the same
 - INTERPOLATION: filling the empty spaces between established facts that make up a serie
 - ANALOGY: assuming that a situation that is not fully known is going to develop in a way similar to a known situation
- Nevertheless, these inferences are not always accurate, and the reporter can be wrong when making them

How to produce radio features: the reasoning

- Nevertheless, these inferences are not always accurate, and the reporter can be wrong when making them
- Some possible mistakes
 - Taking the whole for a part
 - Reducing reality to his own images, an
 - Accepting stereotypes and prejudices
- For this reason, it is very important to respect the nature of the facts and the context of the statements

How to produce radio features: the conduction

- This corresponds to the design of the script, once we have collected all the material
- In this conduction there are 4 key aspects:
 - Language
 - Style
 - Tone
 - Structure

Threats to avoid when producing radio features

- Lack of depth
- Excess interpretation
- Lack of expressive variety
- Excess of style
- Lack of structure
- Abusing of improvisation

Threats to avoid when producing radio features

– Lack of depth

- all types of features (also the elementary ones) must include some kind of depth because that depth is in the very essence of features

– Excess interpretation

- interpretation should go too far and turn into reporters' opinion
- “factual statements” are allowed but “value judgments” do not

– Lack of expressive variety

- the feature is a genre that is distinguished by its variety and high level of expressive resources

Threats to avoid when producing radio features

- Excess of style

- style is always at the service of the communicative function of all radio features

- Lack of structure

- the layout must be logical to ensure the logical order and balance of the pieces and resources

- Abusing of improvisation

- abuse of colloquial and improvised language normally leads to poor expression

Required skills for producing radio features

- Knowing how to look
- Knowing how to listen
- Knowing how to think
- Knowing how to express something
- Knowing humanity

Adapted from Sánchez Sánchez:
“[Writing as a way of life](#)” (in spanish)

Required skills for producing radio features

- Knowing how to look
 - to be acquainted with the world around us with great interest and curiosity
- Knowing how to listen
 - to deal with people's feelings, ideas, opinions, etc and also to “show” with sounds

Adapted from Sánchez Sánchez:

[“Writing as a way of life”](#) (in spanish)

Required skills for producing radio features

- Knowing how to think
 - good journalism also explains what has happened, whereas bad journalism only describes without making connections or references to the context
- Knowing how to express something
 - good expression is the hallmark of good journalism and therefore, it must be original, varied, clear, well-structured and rhythmical
- Knowing about the human being
 - also because radio is a very personal medium

Adapted from Sánchez Sánchez:

[“Writing as a way of life”](#) (in spanish)

THE END

Thank you very much for your attention