**Classification of Programs**

Moving on from the previous talk in which we discussed various aspects of broadcasting in the sense of target audience and timings of the programs, we will now see in detail as how programs are classified for a full fledged broadcasting house.

**Classification**

Almost all the leading broadcasting houses have put their presentations in these distinct categories namely;

# News

* **Current Affairs**
* **Programming**

Today, we start understanding the first category; news and current affairs.

# NEWS

Perhaps the hallmark of every broadcasting house is presentation of the news. Some are specifically known for it like BBC or CNN. So much is the specialization of this category of broadcast that some houses have now launched channels which round the clock deal with news and news analysis only.

By definition a news is a piece of information which tells you about the recent, events taking place any part of the world and which interests large number of people.

This updating of events is perhaps in the human instinct. But how a producer should deal with this segment of broadcast is what we will be talking in detail.

# Authenticity

First and foremost, the producer must check is the authenticity of the news, reliability of the sources for any mistake here may result in a wide spread reactions.

# Language

The news language is always the standard language with pronunciation and accent socially accepted.

Story lines are simple and short which communicate more. Jarring sentences or complicated structuring of lines will only ruin the whole exercise.

# Taboos

There are certain things in every society mention of which is not encouraged, even if the facts are correct. No society allows mentioning of sacrilegious matters or talking more on racism even if some even to this effect has taken place. For the sake of not fanning such things, these matters are put in the low key. In Pakistan, for instance, stories of rape, murder or other social distortion are not given any undesired publicity by the broadcasting houses for the society does not permit there mention too often. Knowing such sensitive matters is one of the primary things a news producer must be aware of.

# Sensationalizing

A big no. News are written and read in a manner they do not cause undesired bent to, or from, an event. They must be delivered in a standard way. In fact if there is a juicy news - about show-biz, sports or politics, a good news producer will tend to subtract sensational area from it so that it does not cause an immediate reaction. But it does not suggest by any means that the interest in the news be shrinked. It is here, qualities of a news producer are exposed.

# Voice Quality

People appearing in different broadcast possess different voice qualities - level, stress, mincing words, some natural some un-natural, sharp, hoarse and with a range of accents. But for news reading a person is required whose voice quality should be described as STANDARD. It is difficult to define it, but the voice, which has high social acceptability, could be categorized for it.

# Reading Speed

It is suggested that a news reader must practice the script, and is very well trained, in keeping a uniform speed for reading different news throughout the given bulletin. It will be a very embarrassing situation for the producer, as well as listeners, to see a broadcaster reading slowly in the beginning and then running fast through the later part of the newsreel. This also suggests that news producer should put as much reading material on the script which must be finished right in time of the bulletin with the uniform reading speed adopted by the news reader. This is easy said then done. A lot of practice is required to keep matters in control.

# Proximity

Selection of news is the area about which it is generally said that it is here that a news editor/producer grows grey hair or loses hair faster than others. And truly said so. At a news section of a broadcasting house you will encounter tens of thousands of news items pouring in from all around the world - the volume of this material in a day is enough to keep you busy reading it a whole week if not less. How to choose news which suit to my bulletin is a huge question facing a news producer many times a day. And unfortunately you do not have ample time to think, but take a decision as quickly as possible for the legs of the wall-clock are ticking fast to keep you under pressure for a decision.

Let’s see what helps him in news selection; proximity of events is perhaps the first guideline for him… an event taking place in Pakistan, suppose a rail accident killing five people, is a preferred story for him than killing of 30 people in some South American state by a cyclone. A political statement from a top ranking official in Pakistan will feature prominently in a news bulletin run by a Pakistani Broadcasting house, than a similar statement issued by an even senior ranking official of another country, mattering little to people of Pakistan.

Then he knows the regional issues, developments in the Muslim world and the international scenario which may interest people here. More he knows about it easier is the selection process for him; though it is never easy in standard terms.

# Specific NEWS

With specialization emphasized in all the well spread out areas, special news bulletins are arranged for specific target listeners. Many a broadcasting house, and the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation included, news bulletins meant generally for a specific segment of society are arranged; special news bulletin for farmers carrying mainly agricultural news, for benefit of such arrangement is that more material could be put across here as compared to general newsreels which would only touch briefly on these issues for want of time.

# Breaking NEWS

These days we hear business community or sporting news for the people who interests more in these areas. The more of it. Well, this means stopping your routine transmission to announce news of immediate interest and importance to most people. This must be done prudently otherwise people will lose interest in the routine newscasts.

And before we end this discussion, we should not forget noticing news bulletin in regional, or as they are called these days, national languages. This exercise is done to accommodate and communicate things worth news to people in the remote towns, especially speaking languages in a particular dialect and diction. Such bulletins usually carry news of local contents.

As the title suggests matters of day to day life featuring in different broadcasts are placed in the category of current affairs. As no channel can survive without broadcasting news, there is also no escape from making programs of current affairs. So wide is the scope of current affairs programs that we need to put them in a classified manner.

# Talk Shows

Generally an expert is called to speak 7-8 minutes on a subject of current interest. This is followed by a talk between him and an anchorperson. Such programs usually last for 25-30 minutes with the main purpose of giving a detailed view of an issue which has surfaced recently in one way or the other. Or a new dimension assumed by an old issue, may also be the topic for the talk in these shows.

# Discussions

More than one person are invited to take part in a discussion on the pattern of round-table conference in which every participant is given equal weight and right to speak from his/her individual point of view. The compere plays the role of conducting the program. A lot of training is required to compere such programs as in these programs every body wants to talk more and loud. At times it is not manageable to continue the discussion, especially if it is a political issue, or regional matter in which strong arguments exist on both sides of the line-of- opinion. The role of compere here is to cool down the matters and take the program to a logical conclusion so that listeners should benefit more, rather than feeling a bad taste in the mouth at the close of the program. Some time some compere tend to take side with one opinion and then with others only to generate a heated debate, and in their wisdom, making the program interesting and lively. As far it does not cause a heart burning to any interest-group, or any ill- will, there is no harm in doing so. But generally such an approach is not encouraged; an anchorperson should stay as neutral in a discussion as possible.

# Interviews

Interviews are the live-wire for current affairs for any broadcasting house. Every expert in his or her area of operation is not imparting information all the time which is in the interest of common people. Some time the people with high opinion on matters of common interest are so busy with their routine life that they do not get time and space to share their expertise with the people. Broadcasting houses get hold of these people and with the help of an interviewer, who is usually very well acquainted with the subject, hold an exclusive question-answer session called, an interview, with them.

Since interviews, is a huge area, it is divided into sub-categories:

**Single Person Interviews**: Here an expert is asked questions by one person to cover the issue as much as possible.

**Panel Interviews**: This category refers to an interview conducted by more than one person. For instance three people interview the Prime Minister. Panel interviews are held for a person holding a top slot where he or she is performing multiple tasks. Experts in the panel ask questions in which they can easily talk, to make common people understand the intricacies of the issue in a rather simple fashion.

Interviews may be about a **personality**. You interview many literary people to know more about the person of Ghalib or Faiz. A politician, a sportsperson or a philanthropist may be the focus for this category of interviews.

Interviews may be about a **situation.** You collect information by interviewing scores of people about the havoc caused by an earthquake, a fire in a building, a storm or a crime.

And lastly, interviews may be about a **topic** like health. You question a number of doctors about an epidemic, which has recently hit a town.

# Seminars

A very favorite category in current affairs is arranging seminars for the purposes of broadcasting. Here a sizeable audience is invited with an expert presiding over the session. One or two speakers first make their presentation on a topic of current interest in any arena of life varying from religion, economics, sports, childcare to cinema-world. Their speeches follow questions from audience (on controversial matters it is difficult to control audience as well as speakers). The chairperson is however, there to keep matters in control. The questions session is followed by remarks and observation of the presiding person who generally summarize the topic and announces conclusion of the sitting.

# Live Shows

Usually arranged for the purpose of entertainment, but it is not a text book rule. These shows may be on any topic - to honor your national hockey team which has won a world championship; for the artist from neighboring country who have come to participate in some fund-raising campaign, or to show how balloting process is going on the day general elections for the National Assembly are held. These shows generally generate more interest and involve more people into a discussion. The script for such shows is usually written in a lighter mood, enabling people to participate with more freedom and without the fear of being very formal when the microphone is pointed towards them.

But one point must be borne in the mind about these shows- it is at the same time a test of nerves for the producer for any person can say any thing in any manner which a broadcasting house cannot afford to air! Say Bravo to producers who take up the challenge of doing a live show.

# OUTDOOR BROADCASTING I

Many times programs have to be covered away from the cozy, air-conditioned and rather calm studios of a broadcasting station. Making these programs is sometimes very demanding. It is raining outside, or chilly whether posing a threat or conditions are too hot and humid but you cannot escape the assignment. The place you are going to make a piece for broadcast is dusty, ugly, narrow city lanes or vast expanse of countryside where road condition is shabby and recklessly driven tractor-trolleys are moving around frequently, people out there are not very supportive, and the worst, some part of the equipment goes out of order. Help me God, this should not cost me my job, a producer may howl.

Forget the hazards. Let's see when essentially an outdoor broadcast is required:

# VIP Movement

It is common all around the world that dignitaries belonging to the governments or diplomatic circles keep visiting places of public life. A broadcasting station is supposed to cover the functions held in honor of VIPs.

The first hassle they encounter is to get through the security network by obtaining security passes from the relevant departments and display those prominently all through the event. Then, arrange an outdoor broadcast (OB) van to carry the staff and the equipment hours before the arrival of the dignitary.

You have to fix your microphone at a very appropriate position for recording the sound and lay power lines and leads of your equipment. Some time the power point is quite away and your lead is not that long. The security agencies are generally not very friendly. Since they are already doing a very sensitive job, the security personnel do not allow you move at all over the place. The rush of the people is also very confusing for the OB team who is not familiar with the place. Some how things have been managed and now the whole unit is waiting for the VIP to come and speak. Waiting, waiting, waiting…

What may be the worst to happen, and perhaps little common too, it is announced in the eleventh hour that place for the function has been changed! No, don't strike your head against the wall, pack up friends quickly and manage matters at the changed venue.

# Suddenly Assigned Events

Not the VIP movement bothers you to outdoor coverage, at times an unscheduled assignment may come up. This time it is an outbreak of a fire at an important city installation. Or floods have struck the town, an earthquake has caused ruination, you are supposed to rush out rather unexpected. Don't leave your equipment behind, especially the microphone!

# Collecting Reactions

On mega events, you need to collect reactions from people in the streets. Like their views on the annual budget, political developments, some regional changes or seeing people who have witnessed a rail accident. An outdoor broadcast is a must.

# Road Shows

Getting very popular these days, broadcasting houses are inclined to go to the people for talking to them for fun sake, or on serious issues. Special OB teams are arranged to move in

different directions to collect the needful within a time frame. This is an interesting development, though not for the broadcasters, you