
UNIT 3 ESSENTIAL PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES : ADAPTING FOR RADIO — THE SPOKEN WORD

Structure

- 3.0 Aims and Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Writing for the Ear
 - 3.2.1 Focusing and Recentering
 - 3.2.2 Self-Evaluation
- 3.3 The Spoken Language
 - 3.3.1 The Sound of Normal Speech
 - 3.3.2 Informal Words
 - 3.3.3 Contractions
 - 3.3.4 Simple Sentences
 - 3.3.5 Incomplete Sentences
 - 3.3.6 Dialogue and Character
- 3.4 Narration
 - 3.4.1 The Function of Narration
 - 3.4.2 Types of Narration
 - 3.4.3 Some Rules for Writing Narration
- 3.5 Radio's Lack of Visuals
- 3.6 Sound Effects (SFX)
 - 3.6.1 Types of Sound Effects
 - 3.5.2 Identifying and Describing SFX
- 3.7 Music for Radio
- 3.8 Format for Radio Scriptwriting
- 3.9 Adapting for Radio : Some General Notes
- 3.10 Summing Up
- 3.11 Aids to Answers

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At the end of your study of this unit, you will be able to:

- state the general rules for adapting for Radio;
- state the fundamentals of writing for Radio;
- define the importance of sound-effects and music in a radio script; and
- describe the format for Radio Scripting.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier units you learnt about the programmes that are broadcast over Radio. These different radio programmes demand certain fundamental techniques for writing. Scripting Radio lessons, Radio plays, Radio features etc. are all different from scripting for the print medium. In this unit we will discuss the techniques of writing for Radio. Read the unit carefully and attempt the activities given at the end of different sections. Check with the model answers given at the end of the unit (3.11).

Writing for Radio is different from writing for the print medium. This is because the Radio scriptwriter is first and foremost a communicator who writes for oral presentation. Hence the skills to be acquired by him are different from those needed by someone writing for print. In order to acquire these skills, the scriptwriter must be familiar with his/her specific medium of communication : in this case, radio.

3.2 WRITING FOR THE EAR

The writer for broadcasting must be particularly sensitive to the sound of the spoken

language. A **difficult** sentence in a book can be read twice but broadcasters cannot keep repeating what the **audience** has not understood. Members of the audience have to **absorb** material without an opportunity to study it. They cannot ask a speaker to repeat a **fact** or request clarification of a complex point. This factor has important implications for those who write for the ear.

The writer for broadcast also has another important point to consider. The audience being addressed are isolated people who cannot experience the social facilitation enjoyed by a group in an auditorium or movie hall. In effect, the broadcaster is speaking directly to **members** of the audience in their houses, offices or cars. Even though millions may be listening, they are not all in one place. This makes it imperative for the broadcaster to use an informal, conversational style of speaking.

3.2.1 Focusing and Recentering

The most important task of the scriptwriter is to be able to focus upon a relevant area. If education, for instance, is the subject of a scriptwriter, she can hardly be expected to deal with each and every aspect of the issue in detail. If she does, chances are that the programme will just turn out to be a confusion of ideas. Now some of you may ask, why? Why isn't it possible to discuss every aspect of educating? Let's list the different aspects linked to the **concepts** of educating.

educating
habitual dispositions
meaningful materials
criteria of excellence
indoctrination
conditioning
socialization
educative
miseducative
deliberate intervention
refined set of materials
eventful process
meaning
thinking
feeling, acting
change
felt significance

Now, if you take this list to a student of education, **s/he** will tell you that it is possible to write **complete** theses on each of these aspects of educating. So what do we do? Obviously, we select only a small portion of the facts for presentation. But the much larger body of all **the facts** listed above has to be absorbed and studied by the researcher. This is necessary because the (programme)... is in the first place a **simplification** of its **subject**.

A scriptwriter, though **s/he** may possess a large body of research, is required to focus **and select** the material to be **highlighted** in the script. This is imperative, especially in the light of physical limitations like time available, budget, audience attention-span and duration of the programme. If the time allotted to a scriptwriter is 10 minutes it is futile to attempt an ultimate analysis of any issue.

Just as focusing upon a subject is important, it is equally important to be able to re-focus. A scriptwriter must **realize** that people's **perceptions** and points-of-view are what make ideas complex and interesting.

In the section above, we have talked about seeing from different perspectives or seeing creatively. This involves using imagination to **recenter** viewpoint. Robert Mckim in *Visual Thinking* defines recentering as the ability to move from one imaginative filter to another. The recentering perceiver would, for instance, see an

old building as would an architect (assessing the formal quality of its structure), then as would a historian (assessing the period when it was built), then as would the owner **him/herself** (it needs a new coat of a paint) and so on. **Flexibility**, is the **key** word people who can flexibly **use** their imagination to recenter, see creatively. Those who cannot recenter, by contrast, experience a one-sided, stereotyped vision of reality.

3.2.2 Self-Evaluation

Writing is a lonely art because the writer can rarely see the reaction of **his/her** audiences. In most instances, radio and television writers have access only to the reactions of those who are involved with the programme, and their judgements. Therefore, a scriptwriter must have the capacity to approach **his/her** writing with a sense of discrimination and self-criticism. It is difficult to maintain objectivity for something as personal as a piece of writing, especially **if/when** one has worked hard over it. Dedicated and **committed** people often confuse the high purpose they have set out to achieve with what they have actually written.

3.3 THE SPOKEN LANGUAGE

We have mentioned above that writing for broadcasting is actually writing for the ear. Therefore, it is important to understand how the script will sound. A scriptwriter should make a practice of reading **his/her** script aloud while writing.

3.3.1 The Sound of Normal Speech

Scriptwriters should have a very good sense of what normal speech sounds like and get away from the confines of written speech. Even though a writer may not reproduce normal speech on radio, she would want **her/his** characters to sound **like** real people. It is not only the business of dramatists to make their characters sound real but also of the presenters and commentators. The skill of sounding normal has a lot to do with the writer's knowledge of the devices at his disposal. The use of the active voice, for instance : it is more direct and vigorous to say : "I shall always remember my first visit to Calcutta" than "my first visit to Calcutta will always be remembered by me".

3.3.2 Informal Words

Everyday speech, first of all, abounds in short, informal, colloquial words. Though elegant and formal words may be chosen to describe, say for instance, an ornate personality, a habitual **use** of them would sound stiff and studied, if not pompous. Avoid fancy words like *beauteous*, *curvaceous* and *discombobulate*. Even the most eloquent person is likely **to** use short and simple words when engaged in conversation. If you read interviews of famous writers and scholars, you will find that there is a prevalence of simple words and colloquialisms in their speech. They usually restrict the use of long, **complicated** specialized terms to their textbooks and scholarly monographs. When **speaking**, it is likely that a scholar would refer to a rose as "beautiful" than remark that it was "full of pulchritude".

3.3.3 Contractions

The use of contractions **is** important for the scriptwriter. In ordinary conversation, we do not say that "I am **going**", "I could not do that", "You did not tell me", etc., but rather, "I'm going", "I couldn't do that", "You didn't tell me". However, there are occasions when the **use** of noncontracted expressions is deliberate. When emphasis is sought, for **example**, "I do not", **sounds** more forceful than "I don't". The noncontracted **form**, **in** addition, may be used to characterize the affected or pedantic person or to **introduce** a special quality into the dialogue.

3.3.4 Simple Sentences

A third requirement is to use short and simple sentences. Again, as mentioned above, the writer must be well **aware** of elementary rules of usage that help to simplify expression. Definite assertions sound better **than** tame, **colourless**, hesitating, non-committal language. Therefore the sentence, "He did not think studying Latin was a sensible way to use One's time" sounds more definitive when expressed in the

positive form . "He thought the study of Latin, a waste of time".

3.3.5 Incomplete Sentences

A fourth way to suggest the sound of normal speech is to use incomplete sentences when necessary. People, engaged in every day conversation, often start a sentence, forget what they were going to say, or feel that their meaning is obvious, and break off in the middle, or more likely, they are interrupted by some one else. The device of broken sentences or the **interrupted** line helps to give a conversational quality to dialogue or narration. A simple response like "... sure" or "of course" to a question like "Do you think politicians manipulate the electorate?", sounds more conversational than "Yes, I certainly believe so".

3.3.6 Dialogue and Character

Dialogue writing makes use of all the devices above and more. Dialogue is the scriptwriter's most important tool of revealing character. In developing character, the writer must avoid putting anything into the lines that will be inconsistent with the character who speaks **them**. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* revolves around the Prince of Denmark who is a victim of conflicting emotions. He wants to avenge the death of his father but cannot bring himself to kill the murderer. Unable to free himself from this web of conflicts, he contemplates suicide. The monologue that Shakespeare wrote amply articulates this dilemma: "To be or not to be, that is the question ...". It would have sounded pretty odd if Hamlet came out of his chamber saying "I know what I'll do ... I'll kill them off!".

Dialogue should be carefully scripted to carry vital information. Most dialogue should be purposefully designed to reveal character, advance the story or highlight the theme.

Another important attribute of dialogue is **economy**. The writer must avoid the usage of jargon and verbiage and use dialogue effectively to distill the essence of his subject matter or his characters.

When characters represent specific occupations, come from certain well defined regions or live in a time period different from the present, their speech must reflect these conditions. Doctors, for instance, are likely to use a very different language when they speak among themselves. In their language, stiff neck is referred to as myositis, **indigestion** as gastroenteritis and shortsightedness as myopia. Terms like these give the dialogue of the physicians an authenticity. Writing dialects is an extension of this problem of finding the authentic terms and style. It is important for the scriptwriter to **research well into local phrases and styles, preferably with someone who belongs there**. Very often, problems begin when scriptwriters begin writing what they think dialects sound like.

The use of dialects can be a comment on character as well. It gives us an idea of where the character comes from : **her/his** background, etc. The play and musical *My Fair Lady* uses change in dialect to depict the evolution of a common flower-girl Eliza Doolittle into a sophisticated young woman.

However, do not use dialect unless you are a devoted student of the tongue and are absolutely confident of reproducing it. If you use dialect, be consistent and economical. An overuse of different dialects will **only serve** to confuse the listener

Activity 1

Given below is an extract **from** a radio-talk. Read it closely and try to rewrite it to achieve clarity.

Yet one cannot but raise the question of how far these post-Festival increases in tourism and trade can be ascribed to the Festivals and how far to other factors operating alongside, such as a greater interest in third world countries, the fact that, as one **foreign visitor** put it, as other destinations get exhausted or put out of bounds due to political troubles, one decides that 'instead of a fun holiday in the Bahamas let's get serious and "**do**" India' with more than a nod due here in the **direction** of Attenborough, *Jewel in the Crown* et al for sparking the interest, the fact that there are more packages and tours operating to India than before and, in the case of trade, to a change in economic polities.

(Check with Aids to Answers 3.11)

3.4 NARRATION¹

Narration plays an important part in radio. The use of narration in film and television has receded sharply because in **visual** forms it is not necessary to describe what is happening. Narration therefore, has still its widest use in radio. This section will review the contributions **that** narration can make, the types of narration and some rules for their use.

3.4.1 The Function of Narration

The major function **of narration** is that it conveys information to an audience more economically than dialogue. There are three main functions of narration. They are :

- i) The narration, first and foremost, can provide exposition; it can look backward and provide **information** about the past.
- ii) Similarly, it can move ahead and throw light on the future. It can collapse and convey a large amount of information very economically. Narration also serves to reinforce. Providing information or interpretation through narration can reinforce the message **and** thereby enhance the impact of the situation. **One** must also bear in mind that at no point should the narrator overstate. Too much of reinforcement from the narrator often results in overkill. Narrative reinforcement should **be** used with great discrimination.
- iii) Thirdly, narration can be the vehicle for the writer's **own** comment on the issue. Though observations **like** this may enrich the meaning of the programme, an overdose of gratuitous **and** unnecessary comment will inevitably dull the impact. Besides this, narration can have a filtering effect by capsuling incidents, situations and dramatizations which, if presented straight, can result in being excessive and unbearable. In the '**Mahabharata**' directed by Peter Brooke, the narration often performs a filtering function. At the end of the great war between the royal families, when the **Kauravas** are completely routed and with Duryodhana unfairly defeated in battle, Ashwathaman (a warrior in the Kaurava army) goes out at night and sets ~~the~~ Pandava camp on fire. The slaughter of the sleeping Pandavas is a brutal **episode** full of blood and gore. Instead of depicting the actual incident Brooke gets Ashwathaman to confess his crime to a dying Duryodhana in the battlefield. This way, we hear of the incident at one remove and are spared the actual violence.

3.4.2 Types of Narration

Because narration may be Spoken in the first, second or third person, it may be categorized in terms of the "person" (first, second or third) in which it is presented. The third person narration is the simplest and the most common. This has also been the **most** traditional type **of** narration, in which the narrator is not involved in the action. A first person narration can be useful especially in radio drama. In radio, the advantage of the first person narration is that it presents information to the audience without awkwardly interrupting a dialogue scene or suspending the dramatic quality of a script. (E.g.) *David Copperfield* by Dickens can be serialised in this way. A third type of narrative **presentation** approaches the viewers in the second person, addressing them as "you" and inviting them to visualise themselves as taking a part in the action. This **however**, has the disadvantage of sounding forced and artificial, but it can also invest the **programme** with a sense of immediacy and encourage audience participation, for **example**, in stories from *Panchtantra* for children where the narrator advises the children.

3.4.3 Some Rules for Writing Narration

The most important thing to remember while writing a narration is that it should be made an **integral part of the script design**. Narration should be built into the structure of the script. The narration should retain the flavour of spoken language. All the **rules** that apply to writing the dialogue also apply here. It must never become cumbersome or pretentious. Take for instance, the opening lines of **Satyajit Ray's** documentary film on Rabindranath **Tagore**, "On August 7, 1941, in the city of Calcutta, a man died. His mortal remains perished but he left behind a heritage no fire could consume". In three simple sentences Ray is able to hint at the passing of an era. Note also the gradual disclosure; this provides a build-up. Who is this man who **died**? **This** build-up would have been absent, had Ray said, '**Rabindranath Tagore** died on August 7, 1941'. Narration must have the quality of the spoken word. Moreover, it should fit the mood and character of the programme.

While writing the narration, make sure that the sentences are as short as possible. Long sentences have no place in radio broadcasting. Short sentences are easier to read and easier for the listener to understand. Sentence length, should vary so that all sentences are not of the same length otherwise a sing-song effect would be created. The soundtrack must have breathing space; this means a relief from any kind of talk. 'Breathing space can be created with sound, music or even silence'.

Activity 2

Read the sentence given below! Try to rewrite it in three short, simple sentences.

Jamal, who is about to leave the school where he has been for five years, which included a time as the class monitor, is looking for a job.

.....
.....
.....

(Check with Aids to Answers 3.11)

3.5 RADIO'S LACK OF VISUALS

In film or television much of the narration is done by visuals. Therefore, it is enough to have narration mention the significance of the action and not the action itself. In radio, however, the narration, dialogue or commentary has to describe the action as well. It would be **tembly dull** if the radio went on to describe everything like a book! Description of the action or situation has to be implied within the dialogue or narration. Shakespeare, for instance, to remedy the lack of stage props on the Elizabethan stage, would take the aid of "scene painting". When Macbeth (in the play of the same name), hallucinating a dagger after committing murder, exclaims : "Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand?", we know what he has seen. Shakespeare goes on to describe Macbeth's futile attempt to clutch the dagger, without resorting to narration, by continuing the monologue : "Come, let me clutch thee. I have thee not, ...". Thus writing for radio, often demands "**Scene Painting**". This means building 'visuals' into dialogue and this is an effective dramatic device. In a documentary or feature, the narrator would be expected to supply the visuals. It may not be enough to state that "students went on a strike today". It may be visualized for the listener by mentioning that the "the campus today wore a deserted look with students having gone on a strike".

All forms of visual communication have the advantage of communicating with or without sound. Radio, however, begins with nothing at all except absolute silence. No curtains are raised, no lights flashed onto the screen. To this utter emptiness in radio, the scriptwriter adds sounds, settings, period, mood and character.

In radio the scriptwriter prompts you, the listener, to apply your own imagination to the setting and characters. In this way, radio has the capacity to paint pictures, bigger and more fantastic, than those on the screen. Have you seen Hollywood science-fiction films like **Star Wars** and **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**? Or,

mythologicals like **Ben Hur** and **Cleopatra**? If you have, you will understand the time, money and effort spent in repeating the setting and characters. In radio, **all** that would be unnecessary. **Moreover**, because radio programmes take place in the minds of the listeners, one could have any setting or character without **anyone complaining** that it was not what **s/he** had **visualised** it as. You could have Tipu Sultan, for **instance**, without anyone complaining that, "that is not the way he looked". What you would require, however, is an understanding of what is radio. In other words, a complete comprehension of how visual and literary codes can **be translated** into auditory codes, that is, sound. What becomes **imperative** thereby, is a competent grasp over the use of sound.

3.6 SOUND EFFECTS (SFX)

In a radio script, sound effects (which are usually denoted by the **symbol SFX**) play a very essential role. Where radio lacks in visuals, the sound effects supply the need.

3.6.1 Types of Sound Effects

There are a number of ways in which **SFX** can be described. One useful way to classify them is according to **the** function they perform. First, **action sounds**. Mostly, sound is created through movement or action. The sound produced thereby is an effective indication of the situation. Advancing footsteps may denote an entry. Retreating footsteps may denote an exit. The clock striking indicates the time. Tapping of a cane may denote a blind man and so on. **Action sounds** may also describe the mood of the situation. A door slamming shut may indicate anger or someone humming or **whistling** may indicate a sense of lightheartedness.

Ambient sound, on the other hand, suggests the locale and setting. Take for instance, the production of radio **drama**. The lovers are at the railway station and are about to part. How would you **convey** it's a railway station? Surely you can't have **your** characters say, "Here, in the **station ...**" and so forth. A narrator may sound equally silly. Your best bet is to use **ambience**. The sound of voices, trains hooting, trains running and feet shuffling **create** an ambience that is very typical. The dialogues spoken against a background of this ambience will give you what you want..

As scriptwriter you will have to use a lot of discretion **regarding** the use of sound. **Too** few may make your **production** insipid while too many is quite likely to distract. **SFX** should be woven into the script in such a way that it does not stand out or draw attention to itself. Needless **piling** of one **SFX** on top of another will not **only** clutter the script but introduce **complications** both in terms of production and aesthetics. You must ask :

- Does the sound help **clarify** something?
- Does it add to authenticity?
- Does it create mood or enhance it?
- Does it fit in naturally **or** does it sound forced?

Finally, remember that silence is a very effective sound-effect.

3.6.2 Identifying and Describing SFX

A radio-scriptwriter/producer **must** realize that recorded sound often **sounds** very different from one heard **directly** by the ear. The mediation of technology (**that is**, the recording) creates a **difference**. Therefore, one must remember, **that the source** or cause of certain sounds **cannot** be determined simply by hearing the sound itself.

Secondly, you may have to help the listener to identify **sounds**. **This can be done by** either referring to it in the dialogue ("I thought I heard **gunshots**") or by **associating** it with another sound. The **hustle-bustle** of a railway station may **sound** like **any busy** crossing till you hear a **train coming** into the station. **The train**, thereby, helps **the ambient SFX** to be **recognized** as a station.

When you **are** writing a script, it becomes very important to describe **the sound-effect**. First, you must be **consistent in** the way you choose to describe the **SFX**. **There are** two common ways of **doing this** : one is to describe the action that produces the

sounds and the other is to describe the sounds themselves. In the first method the action is usually labelled "biz" (business) and may appear as follows :

HEMA AND JYOTILEAVE THE CAR, CROSS THE SIDEWALK, CLIMB THE STEPS TO THE HOUSE AND KNOCK ON THE WOODEN DOOR.

Here it's the director's responsibility to produce sounds that reveal the action. Using **the second** method, the specific sounds are indicated as follows.

CAR DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES. FOOTSTEPS ON THE SIDEWALK AND UP THE STEPS. KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

This is the more common method of indicating SFX.

The following are some of the common pitfalls for the new scriptwriter.

- a) **The directions are ambiguous.** A statement like "SFX : Girl leaves room " will keep the director wondering whether you meant the sound of footsteps or the door shutting. It's always useful to **be** specific.
- b) **Avoid unnecessary verbiage.** "SFX : To denote children playing." You can do away with additions like "to denote", "to connote" and "to suggest" and simply go ahead and state what you want to denote, connote or suggest.
- c) **Be economical.** Never clutter your script with a million SFX and avoid irrelevant details. "SFX : **Krishna** broke the bottle containing the green liquid." If the "green" liquid is essential to the story then it would have to be mentioned. If not, then it raises the interesting question as to whether a broken bottle of pink liquid sounds different from one containing **green** liquid.

Activity 3

Borrow a small tape recorder from someone (If you do not have one). Go around your neighbourhood and collect about **ten** separate sound-effects. Once you have done that, get some of your friends together and **play it back to** them. Are **they** able to identify the sounds on hearing? What other way has the exercise helped you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

(Check your answer with the **Aids to Answers** given in 3.11).

Activity 4

The following is an extract from the *Mahabharat* by P. Lal. Your **assignment is** to transcodify the literary text into a script usable for radio. You will be **transcodifying** not just the literary codes (the narrative, for instance).but also the visuals that the narrative describes.

When the period of instruction was finished, Drona put the boys to a test. Planting a wooden vulture on a tree top, he said, "You have each, one turn. Take aim well, stand with arrows fixed. When I give the signal, shoot at the **bird's head**".

Then he turned to Yudhishtira: "You first". Yudhishtira lifted his bow and took aim.

"**Do** you see the bird?"

"Yes."

"**Look** again. Do you see the bird?"

"I **see** the tree, the bird, I **see** you and my brothers:"

Drona repeated the question **and received** the same reply.

"Stand aside", Drona said imtated.

someone listens to your background music and says "how beautiful", you blew it! Your background music should never wme to the **foreground**. It should enrich, enhance or reinforce, but never steal the show!

Suitability is an important factor. Does the music fit the subject? Today conventional ideas are being challenged. No rule is carved on stone. We don't have to use stringed instruments for tragedy and percussion for comedy. But the business of 'fit' still remains equally valid. The music of Pink Floyd is not likely to go well with a programme on traditional Indian puppets!

Avoiding overkill is equally **important**. The director may get so carried away with the **music** that it may drown everything else. Technically, at the production level, the director must keep a strict watch of the audio levels. The music level should be much lower than that of narration, dialogue, conversation or whatever.

3.8 FORMAT FOR RADIO SCRIPTWRITING

The **objective** for having more-or-less standardized radio format (the form of presentation of **a script** for radio broadcast) is that every member of the crew should have a common understanding of the project. Most important, there should be a clear differentiation **between** words that are spoken into the microphone and those that are not. This can be accomplished in a number of ways.

- i) Type all the material to be spoken in regular upper and lower case letters in the usual way. Type all the material that is not spoken in capital letters; this includes character names, directions for reading lines, other descriptive material, music and sound-effects.
- ii) Put parenthesis around any element inserted into a line that is not part of the line itself; this includes directions for reading the lines, music, SFX, notations etc.
- iii) Underline music and **SFX** descriptions and indent them beyond the point where dialogue or narration begins.
- iv) Put parentheses around description of **music** to distinguish it from sound-effects.

It is also important for your radio script to be legibly typed (aspiring scriptwriters should definitely learn typing) and double-spaced. The following is a sample of a standard format :

MACBETH : His horrible shadow mocks me. I will tomorrow to the weird sisters.
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know by the worst means
the worst.

MUSIC : **TRANSITION**

SFX : **WEIRD SOUND ... CAULDRON BUBBLES ... THUNDER ... WIND**

WITCHES : Round about the cauldron go;
In the poisoned entrails throw

1st WITCH : Eye of a newt ...

2nd WITCH : And toe of a frog

3rd WITCH : Wool of a bat ...

WITCHES : Double, double, toil and
trouble;
Fire burn and Cauldron
bubble.

3.9 ADAPTING FOR RADIO : SOME GENERAL NOTES

Understanding of auditory wdes is integral to the understanding of adaptation. In this section, we use the term adaptation to mean (a) the "transfer" of material **from** one form (novels, for instance) to another (say, radio), and (b) more specific replacement of codes (audio by visual or vice versa). Later in the section, the terms "translation" and "adaptation" are used interchangeably.

Many of the scripts **written** for the radio are based on material first created in another form — novels, novellas, short stories, histories, biographies or stage plays. This section will deal with the challenge of writing scripts founded on other works.

First and foremost, you **must** acknowledge ideas that you have borrowed from others. Borrowing ideas from others without acknowledging is plagiarism.

There is another **misconception** that a **scriptwriter** must be completely "faithful" to the original work. This is an outdated notion. The term adaptation — **i.e.**, borrowing from original material should, however, be used carefully.

The following is a brief summary of what adaptation generally involves :

- i) Shortening or **lengthening** the material : Very often the original has to be compressed or expanded. The process of selection should be guided by relevance, dramatic interest and aesthetics.
- ii) Selection of material : Selection need not always be guided by the constraint of length (**i.e.** in order to shorten the material). Sub-plots, scenes of secondary importance may all be sacrificed at the altar of adaptation. You may even eliminate characters that you feel are not adding to the dramatic interest. You may either eliminate or fuse characters.
- iii) Giving a **sense** of the contemporary : This may be **debatable**. **But** contemporary "adaptors" are of the opinion that an adaptation should be relevant to contemporary times. That is, the treatment should not be an absolute slave to interpretations given to it 50 years back!
- iv) Translation into **dialogue** : Here, we are not dealing with translating from one language to another. **It is** the translation of narrative or descriptive material into dialogue. While **translating/adapting** narration or description into dialogue, you must use language suited to the radio.

Translation to auditory **codes** when adapting to radio: This involves the use of sound-effects and music to replace visual codes. Music, for instance, can be used to denote transition **from** one "chapter" to another.

Activity 5

Using the suggestions **made** above, try and adapt the following text into a radio script. The extract is from P. Lal's *Mahabharata* and describes the death of Arjuna's young son, Abhimanyu, in the battle of Kurukshetra. The **battle was** fought between **the** Kauravas (Duryodhana, **Dushasana** and their supporters) and Pandavas (**Arjuna** and his camp). The extract **follows** :

Picking up the mace, Abhimanyu rushed at Ashwatharna, DRONA'S SON. Seeing Abhimanyu **advancing** toward him like a flaming thunderbolt, Ashwathama quickly stepped down from his chariot and took three long leaps backward to escape the falling mace.

Dushasana's son ran up, shouting 'Wait! Wait!' and his mace struck Abhimanyu, even as Abhimanyu **struck** him. Both toppled like tree trunks. Rising up first Dushasana's son hit Abhimanyu on the head as he was struggling to his feet. Stunned by the blow and worn out with fatigue, Abhimanyu, elephant grinder of a lotus army, fell — one warrior killed by many warriors, one elephant killed by many hunters.

(See the answer in 3111)

3.10 SUMMING'UP

The following learning **points** have been discussed in the unit :

- Radio-writing is **primarily** writing for the ear. A common mistake is to confuse radio-writing with writing for the print. To be a good scriptwriter, one needs to be familiar with the codes that belong specifically to that medium. Understanding these codes forms the base for further work.
- A radio scriptwriter **must** go for simplicity and clarity.

- Creative writing implies new presentation. It is not important to come up with new ideas so much as being able to present old ideas in a new way.
- A scriptwriter has often to deal with a vast body of research. It is important for the scriptwriter to be able to focus (select) on a **particular** aspect of the subject. But **s/he** should also be able to see that focus from different perspectives. This enables a good scriptwriter to overcome stereotypes.
- The skill of the scriptwriter involves using informal expressions.
- Dialogue writing is an important skill that the scriptwriter should be able to develop. **S/he** should know the use and function of economical and purposeful dialogue.
- Narration plays **an** important part in radio. It functions to provide exposition, reinforce, make observations and have a filtering effect.
- Narration **can** be in the first, second or third person.
- Narration should be **an** integral part of the script design.
- Radio-script is actually **a storage** of talk. Writing for radio is only complete when it is said.
- Radio has devices to compensate for the lack of visuals. Narration, dialogue, **sound-effects**, sound perspective, **all** play an important part to scene-paint for the listener.
- To do a good job of scriptwriting, the writer must be familiar with the qualities of a good presenter.
- It **is necessary** to know the types of sound-effects and when and how to use them. **Included** in the sound-effects **is** the **use** of music for Radio.
- The various methods involved in the adaptation of fiction and non-fiction for radio **broadcast** include **condensing** of the original, selection of material, transferring narrative or descriptive **material, into** dialogue and translation of visual into auditory codes.

3.11 AIDS TO ANSWERS

Activity 1

Hints :

- a) Break up into four sentences,
- b) See that each sentence is linked logically and grammatically to the previous one,
- c) You will need to change certain words and phrases as well as introduce some new ones into **the** passage.

Answer

Often the question arises as to what accounts for the increase in tourism and trade in the **post-Festival** years. Is it to be ascribed to the interest generated by the Festivals or is it simply **curiosity** to visit the third world countries? The visit to India can also be the last option before the **holiday**ers, as the visits to some of the other places have become impossible due to political troubles there. There is no doubt that interest in India can be attributed to **films** like Attenborough's **Gandhi**, Jewel in the **Crown** etc. As for the increase in trade, it is due to a change in our economic policy.

Activity 2

- 1) **Jamal** has been in school for five years.
- 2) **This** includes a time as class monitor.
- 3) He is now about to leave school to look for a job.

Activity 3

This **activity** **accomplishes** two objectives. First, it makes us aware of sounds that we **normally** do **not pay** attention to. You begin to identify individual sounds from a general ambience. Second, **it** gives us a fair idea of what recorded sound-effects sound like and the potential of "created" sound-effects.

Activity 4

There is no one way of scripting the extract from **Mahabharata**. I give you below the version by famous French playwright, Jean Claude **Carrierre** and translated by renowned theatre director Peter Brooke. **The Mahabharata** by Carrierre is one of the finest scripts written in recent years and also one that could easily be used for the radio with minor modifications and additions.

Drona : On top of this tree I've placed a vulture made of straw and rags. Yudhisthira, take **your** bow. Aim. What do you see?

Yudhisthira : Yes, I **see** the vulture.

Drona : Do you see **the** tree?

Yudhisthira : Yes, I see the tree. I see the bow and the arrow, I see my arm, see **my** brothers and I see you.

Drona : Back to **your** place. Nakula, Come here. You too, Bhima, You too, Duryodhana. Aim at the bird. What do you see?

Nakula : I see the **bird**, the sky ...

Bhima : Yes, I see **them**.

Duryodhana : I see the bird, I see **my** bow, I see the top of the tree.

Bhima : I see a cloud in the sky.

Drona : Back. All of you. Useless to shoot. Arjuna, take your bow. Aim. What do you see?

Arjuna : A vulture.

Drona : Describe the vulture.

Arjuna : I can't.

Drona : Why?

Arjuna : I can only **see** it's head.

Drona : Release your arrow.

Activity 5

Once again, there are a **million** ways to adapt the text into a script. We give you below not a rigid **adaptation** of the text but the version by French playwright Camerre and Peter Brooke. Since the play was made for the stage, I have made certain modifications (like adding sound). The dialogues have **been** reproduced faithfully.

Duryodhana : All my **army shattered** by a child! Drona where is your **promise**? Are you in love with **our** enemies too? Dushasana, go ahead. Kill this **arrogant** child! This lackey of death who smiles and despises us. Kill him!

Abhimanyu : I see ydu! My fist will crush you Dushasana! Come nearer!

SOUNDS OF BATTLE, ABHIMANYU AND DUSHASANA FIGHT WITH BATTLE CRIES.

Take that! Fall! Who wants to die now? I blaze, I am dancing with strength! Karna, I've killed **your** eldest son! Duryodhana, I killed your eldest son! I fly between the armies! **Follow** me, I've opened the disc! Throw yourself into the breach!

Drona : Jayadrata! **Where** is Jayadrata? Quickly, in **position**! This is your moment. Bar the **Pandava's** way!

BATTLE CRIES OF AN ENTIRE ARMY SURGING FORWARD.

Abhimanyu : Bhima, Yudhisthira! Over here! You'd think **the** air itself is blocking you! Quick! Why are you hurling yourself against a wall of **air**?

SOUND OF CHARIOT WHEELS DRAWING CLOSER

I am **alone** in the **middle** of the disc. And the disc is closing again. They're **all** around me. **Karna, Drona, Ashwathama**, they're **all** against me! **Come** closer!

Karna : Drona, you **seem** fascinated by his extraordinary strength.

Drona : Break his **chariot**.

Karna : His chariot is **broken**.

Drona : **Break** his bow!

Karna : His bow **is** broken.

Drona : Break his sword.

Karna : His sword is broken.

Abhimanyu : Drona, you have broken my sword. But I've still this enormous club which no two men can lift.

DULL SOUND OF CLUB HITTING

Karna : His club is broken!

Abhimanyu : I've still got my chariot wheel. I'll crush you under this wheel.

Drona : Karna, break the wheel!

A LOUD CRACK. FOLLOWED BY LOUD BATTLE CRIES.

Abhimanyu : Father

SILENCE. EVERYTHING BECOMES STILL.

You may feel that the extract provided did not have enough material for you to gather the details. When you adapt, you must read extensively, more extensively, than there is space here to reproduce. Reading and research provides the details. Carrière must have read several versions of the **Mahabharata**. But ultimately, it's the imagination that is your guiding creative force. You must think, how must have Abhimanyu died? How well can I bring that out? The following are points as to why this adaptation is so effective :

- The essence of the incident is the death of a **young**, valiant warrior, one warrior killed by many **warriors**, one elephant killed by many hunters.
- Useless information is discarded. The valiance of Abhimanyu is built into the **dramatic** structure. No one breaks into long praises nor is the last fight unnecessarily dragged.
- Economy adds to the tension. Take the lines one by one. Abhimanyu is shorn of his weapons. You will have noticed that in the TV adaptations, how a small incident is dragged on. Here, the events follow in quick succession creating tremendous suspense (what will happen?) and expectancy (will the Pandavas come to his rescue?).
- The dialogues are brief and natural.
- The dialogues add imagery. "Why are you hurling yourselves against a wall of air?"
- The writers are not afraid to improvise. Rigid adaptors may fight over whether **Abhimanyu lost** his weapons in that particular sequence. The truth is, it does not matter. Drama and creative interest come first.