

# Multilingual Broadcasting

## Multilingual show design

Multilingualism is part of everyday life: youths from a migrant background grow up with two languages and create their own language. In Switzerland, anglicisms from pop culture are just as commonplace as those from computer jargon. In Ireland cities, 5 to 10 percent of the inhabitants have a different native language.

Most programmes on state-sponsored radio stations and private commercial radio stations are monolingual. Only on the frequencies of a number of community radio stations, there has been multilingual broadcasting for years. This is often due to the need to implement one's own linguistic reality on air. The beneficial side effect is that more people feel being spoken to.

Multilingual show design not only promotes communication and exchange between locals and immigrants, but also between different generations of migrants.

Multilingual listening and broadcasting enriches the radio landscape. However, this requires listeners and broadcasters to be willing to accept various aspects of uncertainty:

- Not always understanding what is said and thus sometimes feeling "left out". In these situations, it is important to listen anyway, to try to understand and to not give up.
- Also speaking on the microphone in a language which I cannot speak perfectly.
- Making more use of non-verbal communication: after all, in the studio, we also understand each other by means of gestures and facial expressions!

## Methods of multilingual programming

Here, we present proven methods of multilingual show design, each in their pure form<sup>1</sup>. In practice, the methods vary according to topic and linguistic situation<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the methods can often change within a show, or even within an item. But it can also happen that a regular multilingual show always has the same design. Each broadcasting team must find their own way. It helps to experiment!

The linguist Dr. Brigitta Busch from the University of Klagenfurt has investigated different types of multilingualism. Based on her findings, the work group *babelingo* in Switzerland has been developing recommendations on methods of multilingual programming for radio since 2002. These have also been incorporated into the project Inter.Media – Module II: "Methods of multilingual programming".

### Language awareness

In principle, every show is multilingual. Everyone, often unknowingly, uses loan words, special expressions or jargon from other languages, no matter what the topic. The following examples are about conscious use of multiple languages, from individual expressions in another language, through to putting two languages side by side on an equal level.

### Linguistic orientation

The listeners are not used to multilingual situations on the radio. We can make it easier for them to get their bearings with an occasional remark like: "The show you are listening to is in Swahili, English and German."

Anyone presenting alone in two or more languages can also mention the change of language themselves now and then. Saying "and now for something in Turkish once again" acts as a signal for listeners to adjust. However, this method should be used sparingly.

### Word-for-word translation

Everything said is translated into another language in its entirety. This guarantees accuracy. But this form is time-consuming and requires listeners to be patient, because either they hear everything twice, or they have to wait for a long time until they understand something again.

This method is recommended for language learners, or if information is to be reproduced in another language very precisely. It can also be used in multilingual situations where it is important that all participants have an equal say and obtain an equal understanding.

The individual takes in each language should not be too long. The listeners can follow more easily if the languages change more often. Different voices (in this case, allocating one speaker to each language) also loosen things up and make listening easier.

|           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Speaker 1 | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ |
| Speaker 2 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

### Summarising

The content of longer passages is summarised in one or more other languages. This method is similar to word-for-word translation, as it also involves longer alternating language blocks. The summaries can be detailed or less detailed, according to context and requirements.

|           |   |   |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|
| Speaker 1 | █ | █ | █ | █ |
| Speaker 2 |   |   |   |   |

### Example:

In a bilingual live interview, the interviewer asks questions in both languages, the guest answers in their language and the interviewer summarises the answer in the other language.

### Special case: voice-over

This is a method for editing word-for-word translations and original sound. The start of the original is played briefly, then faded into the background and the translation is played over the top. This sounds elegant, but the two languages no longer have equal status. Only the translation can still be understood and the original language has only a symbolic presence (see below).

In editing, playing the start of the original sound serves to document the fact that a personal interview has indeed taken place. The original sound also conveys information about the emotional expression in what is said, the speaker's voice and the atmosphere.

Voice-over is used in pre-produced monolingual items. For "real" multilingual shows, it is not recommended.

### Reframing and linking

Here, the point is not to translate, but to transfer content and statements from one language to the next. This can happen, for instance, by means of an introductory question or a brief summary. This establishes a link for the listener, from one language to the other. It is important that the key statements are always transferred to the other language. All presenters involved must understand all languages used, but the listeners do not need to. The broadcasting team must be well-established and familiar with each other.

|           |   |     |     |     |
|-----------|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Speaker 1 | 1 |     | 2 3 |     |
| Speaker 2 |   | 1 2 |     | 3 4 |

Reframing is an elegant and dynamic method of multilingual programming which is fun to listen to. If the listener only understands one language, they can still follow the content. If they understand all languages, they do not get bored because nothing is repeated.

To ensure that listeners who only understand one language "stay tuned", it is important that the presenter Betty now picks up on what has been said, e.g. "The reasons that motivate our studio guests to work in radio are diverse. Mr X, whom do you want to reach, exactly?"

### Code-switching and language-hopping

With language-hopping, there is no translation or summarising in another language. Instead, the speaker switches to another language suddenly and sometimes unconsciously. This happens, for instance, if a telephone call or studio guest changes the linguistic situation, or if the speaker switches to another language because of a term which they can only think of in this language. If the people talking do not have the same native language, but have several possible reference languages, language-hopping can make understanding easier.

Code-switching refers to the use of jargon, everyday expressions in other languages, slang or second-generation immigrants' rapid, constant changeover between languages.

|           |   |   |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|
| Speaker 1 | 1 |   | 3 |   |
| Speaker 2 |   | 2 |   | 4 |

### Turn-taking: constant presence of multiple languages

Turn-taking means that two languages are spoken in turns. Here, the presenters try to create a balance between languages in the show. Each person is allocated one language. The use of different languages is part of the show's concept, whereby no attention is paid to whether translation, summarising or linking is consistently adhered to. Thus, it can happen that the listeners do not understand at certain times, but that other parts of the show (e.g. tips on upcoming events) are sure to comprise all languages. This can also mean that two languages are heard at the same time.

This method is most suitable for shows in which the presenters can assume that the listeners more or less understand both languages, so it is no longer necessary to ensure that meaning is transferred when changing between languages.

|           |   |   |     |     |
|-----------|---|---|-----|-----|
| Speaker 1 | 1 |   | 2 3 |     |
| Speaker 2 |   | 2 |     | 4 5 |

### Language games and language art

Here, the focus is not on information, but on experimenting with language itself. Language serves as an artistic and experimental design element. In this way, conventions of listening can be deconstructed, reflected on and broadened. This can result in new ways of listening, new methods of multilingual programming and even new languages.

### Music

In multilingual shows, music can play a special supporting role. It is understood by all listeners, regardless of their language skills – although not everyone understands it in the same way.

Above all, music conveys emotional content. Multilingual texts spoken by presenters can be clarified or illustrated by a subsequent piece of music.

Generally, music has an important function in show design which is definitely not to be neglected in multilingual shows: music provides the show with rhythm, transitions, concentration breaks and sense breaks. Music embeds, accentuates and connects.

### Symbolic presence of a language

This refers to short excursions into other languages, for instance when welcoming or saying goodbye. The purpose is not to communicate something in the other language.

The presence of the other language has a symbolic value as a reference or greeting to people who are also listening.

### **Use of languages and language skills in multilingual shows**

Either one language can be allocated to each person, or everyone speaking uses all languages. In broadcasting teams, any lack of language skills can be compensated for easily: anyone who does not feel confident enough, should seek someone to make the show with who has better control of the relevant language.

Conveying all content in both languages only makes sense in exceptional cases (see the "word-for-word translation" section above). For shows made by migrants primarily for their community, it is recommended to divide up the content as follows:

Content which it makes sense to convey in the community's language includes, for example:

- Information which helps people to get along better in Ireland (e.g. about taxes, insurance, laws etc.).
- Items about political events in Ireland.

Content which it makes sense to convey bilingually or multilingually, as it affects a broader public, includes, for example:

- Cultural items and tips on upcoming events.
- Items with information from other countries.

### **Multilingual audio examples**

A commented list of multilingual audio examples can be found at

<http://www.lora.ch/ueberuns/projekte/babelingo/125-babelingo-hoerbeispiele>.

The following CDs also contain collections of multilingual audio examples:

- Interaudio; Materialien für die interkulturelle Radioausbildung (Material for Intercultural Radio Training, 2007).
- Inter.Media; Intercultural Media Training in Europe (2006).

These CDs are part of the corresponding handbooks and compilations of material. They can be obtained at klipp+klang radio school in 8004 Zurich ([www.klippklang.ch](http://www.klippklang.ch)).

### **Sources**

RAWIK Radio Aus- und Weiterbildung im Interkulturellen Kontext Interaudio (2007).

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