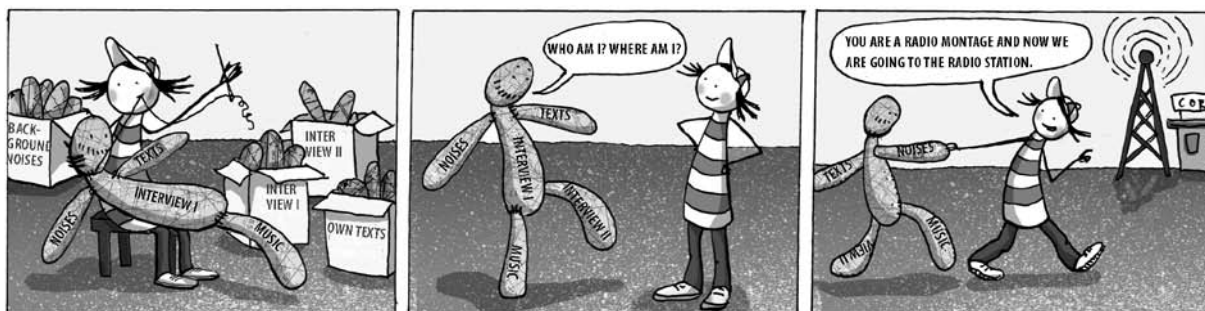


Radio Montage 2

From the Original Interview to a Complete Story – Steps

by Ulrike Werner



From a Pile of Material to a Complete Montage

You want to tell a „story“ with your montage. That is why you have recorded interviews on a certain topic, gathered information and collected reflections and maybe also music, sound effects or interesting noises. Now you should be concerned with putting the different parts together to make a complete “whole” radio montage

On your way “from the pile of material to the complete montage” you will have to part with a lot of the material.

Here you find the steps that help you on your way.

Keep in mind: most of the necessary steps take place before you enter the studio and import your sound effects and speak your texts. Because working in the studio is quicker and more fun if you go into the studio with a plan.

Writing the Minutes of the Interviews: Taking Stock

Your recorded interviews are the material basis for selecting statements. These quoted passages (also called clips) are the framework of your radio montage. That is why, first of all, you listen carefully to your interviews and write down which passages are relevant for your topic:

- Important passages you record in detail, unimportant passages only in keywords.
- You also take note of where on the medium the particular passages are exactly. It is best to take down time, counter readings or track numbers.
- Of passages that you have selected you take down beginning and ending word by word, if possible. This way you can write your own text passages as leading up to the quoted statements

Selecting Statements from the Original Interview: “Spoil for Choice”

Your notes help you choose the ones from your selected interview quotes that fit best into your radio montage. (For a radio montage of three minutes length three to four passages are enough which are about two to six sentences long).

Criteria for selecting:

- quality of sound: only passages that are of good quality can be taken into consideration. Distorted or incomprehensible clips cannot be broadcast!
If a passage is good in respect of content but not of good quality you can reproduce the information in your own texts

Considerations in respect of content:

- Which conclusions/suggestions should result from the radio montage? So, what would suit your topic best?
- Which message can be delivered quite like this only by your interviewee?
For example: His /her experience, point of view, criticism, analysis, worldly wisdom, demand, his/her brand of humour, insight etc. This way this person becomes unveiled for the people listening to the montage during the short quoted passage that can be heard.

Small anecdotes, stories or colourful examples should always be taken into consideration.

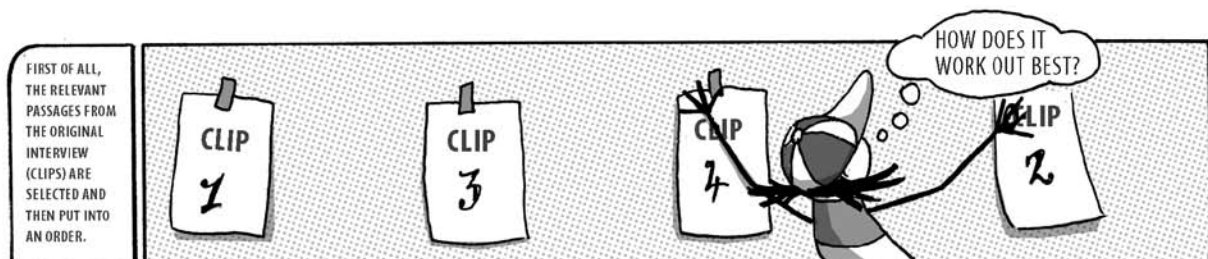
In contrast: all details, background information and facts that you can find out /get yourself somewhere else and not only from this particular person can be put into your own text passages. Such general information is often told in great detail in the original quoted passage and you can give a much shorter and clearer account.

These questions are always accompanied by acoustic considerations: Which quoted passages are particularly memorable and which do you like best? Those should always be considered.

One selected statement should not contain more than one central theme.

Beware of Manipulating!

Your interview partner wants to recognise himself with his opinions and statements in your montage. If you select individual passages from the interview and put them in a new order and combine them with other interview clips and texts you can easily convey a completely different impression of a statement. So check your selection also from this angle.



Arranging the Clips: The “Framework” of the Montage

The selected interview passages are now arranged in an order that allows you to present your topic in the best and most interesting way. That is almost never the order of the original interview.

Considerations for the arrangement:

- How is your entrance to the topic? (“Make a strong entrance”)
- How do you want to further develop the story? What are you aiming at?

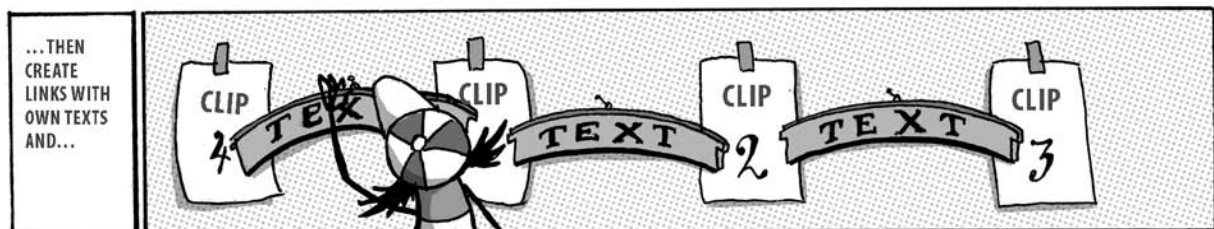
→ regarding the structure also see handout 1 on radio montage

Finding Head Words: the “Index Card Method”

To try out the best arrangement of the clips the “index card method” helps. For each selected interview passage you write a card on which you note the content of the clip in key words. Above you write a suitable head word. Now you can move the index cards back and forth until the order is right. (see Radio Montage 1). Between the individual cards you leave some room: for texts, but also for music and sound effects. This is how the “framework” of the radio item develops

Keyword plan

The original passages from the interview form the “skeleton” of the radio montage which becomes a whole only with your own texts (or also music and sound effect). That is why you left gaps between the different clips: for your own texts that will lead like bridges from one clip to the next. It makes sense to first write down in keywords into the link-chinks which information, which example, which episode can create the respective link. When you have written keywords into all the gaps your keyword plan is complete.



Own Presentation Texts: “Bridges” between your Clips

Now you write out your keywords in full phrases. Your own presentation texts develop. Thereby, your keyword plan turns into a manuscript. Later on you speak your texts in the studio and record them. You can either speak using the key words or write them out in full. If you are still inexperienced it is advisable to write down the texts. This helps you to get to the point and gives you a sense of security when recording in the studio.

What should a presentation text say

All necessary information (Who? What? Where? How? Why?) that does not emerge from the clips should go into your text. (For example who will say or has said something in a clip, but also facts.) In your texts you also convey important information that you have not chosen to include as clips in a colourful way. The texts can also – for example by describing a situation – provide the “image to the sound”.

A reportage-like narrative style can be suitable. For example, you can illustrate how the choirmaster Irina is acting during choir practice. You can also create a frame plot (passage by passage e.g. “a day in a hostel”). Or you provide a key word or mental link that enables the listeners to place what they have heard. This way you build a frame into which the clip fits well. Your clip becomes more understandable and powerful.

For the composition of your own texts the same holds true that applies when speaking on the radio in general: pictures, situations, basic and concrete language and examples are better to listen to than abstract information. This is also valid for factual reporting texts!

Per Text Passage only Plan for one Central Theme

Provide one piece of information at a time. If a text passage contains too many thoughts it gets overloaded!

Where do the Ideas for the Texts come from?

- passages from your interviews that you do not use as a clip
- information or impressions from preliminary or subsequent talks
- observations and impressions during the interview (situations that you have seen, the interview's surroundings etc.)
- additional research material: press releases, newspaper articles, books
- information from other people, talking with others
- films, photos, post cards

Making more than one Language Audible – Possible Ways to Translate

The radio montage gives you the opportunity to present clips, texts and music in several languages. If the community you are broadcasting for is multilingual you can leave the languages without translation. Also if you want to catch the "atmospheric", so to say, the sensual acoustic impression you do not necessarily have to translate. But if the content is important to you and you have to assume that the majority of listeners do not understand all these languages, it is advisable to translate. Also music lyrics that are important can be translated!

There are several possible ways to translate that you can also mix – just so that it fits

Translating Literally

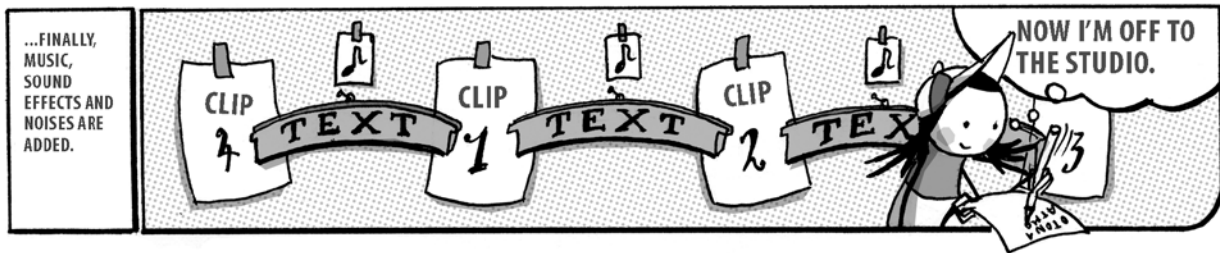
Original language and translation are to be heard alternately. Following each logic item (a sentence, a statement, a thought) it is translated literally, that is completely. This way of translating has the advantage that you can hear each clip and translation in full. It is particularly suitable for shorter passages.

Recapitulatory Translating

After each logic item in the original language the meaning is translated recapitulatorily. Advantage: the listener can hear your interview partner in full. For the listeners who understand both languages it will get repetitive.

Voice over

After two to three sentences you fade the interviewee's clip to low and have a loud translation on top. With this alternative the translation comes to the fore. If you decide on this way you should keep in mind to have at least two to three sentences before and after the translation in the original language so that your listeners can get a personal, vocal and sensual impression of your interview partner. So you will also have to summarise a little in your translation.



Atmospheric Sounds, Noises and Music: Emotion, Atmosphere, Audio-Images

Sound elements present an individual, very charming level of a montage. If the topic is train journeys and you hear recordings of voices, announcements, trains in different stations images develop in the mind. The item on a village community in Tanzania gains a new level through the community's singing because music evokes feelings and makes people audible.

You plan music, sounds and noises, that is, the level of sounds just like the textual level.

With it you can:

- evoke or amplify feelings, sentiments (melancholy, longing, happiness, joy, etc.)
- structure a radio montage
- place acoustic emphases
- bring about changes of scenes
- comment
- question a textual statement
- change the tempo of an item: speed up, dramatise or create respites

Listening and Sensing

Trust your sense of music and rhythm when selecting sound elements and mixing them. Only by hearing and sensing you can estimate the effect of tones. How long to have a piece standing "alone", when to fade in or out, what are the mix ratios? It can be helpful to sense melody sequences, tone and rhythm through drumming the beat, tapping your feet or "directing."

Music

Music evokes feelings, gives your radio item a particular colouring and a distinct rhythm. As soon as music comes into play it dominates. Unlike words music directly affects emotions. Therefore, it also determines the emotional effect of texts with which it is combined. Most of the time in a montage you do not play the full title but choose sections. This you do according to your sense of hearing (fitting motive, do not interrupt before tone has died away, etc.).

- Every piece of music is associated with a cultural context and can, therefore, evoke certain associations. Handle this sensibly. (e.g. Ennio Morricone's music evokes associations to the famous westerns).
- Well-known music activates familiar emotions and feelings during listening and those can be very strong. Everyone knows this from own experience (maybe has to think of a particular experience with a certain song, like the holiday on the seaside...). In a montage you can use this as an advantage to create atmospheres and associations. However, if you do not consider this aspect it can be a disadvantage (because listeners then get wrapped up in their "own films" and do not listen any longer).
- Be careful with clichés. It has a tiring effect if well-known pieces are always used in the same context, e.g. If the subject is money to play ABBA's "Money, Money" or if it is about socialist countries to play "The Internationale"...
- When adding text to music carefully listen to the text in relation to music. If you merely wish to complement text or interview passage, instrumental pieces inconspicuous in rhythm and tone are most suitable. Pieces with singing divert attention from what is said because of the different voice and song text, just like fast, domineering rhythms.
- You can choose different sequences for different places of your montage from one music title. With beginning or ending you can often achieve good effects (e.g. The ending of a song acoustically signals a conclusion. This is suitable when a thought/episode comes to an end.)
- Choose music most of all according to tone and not content of the lyrics. Because tone and rhythm do not necessarily coincide with the content of the song texts!





Atmospheric Background Noises / Sounds

“Atmospheric” sounds are sound images; they consist of a plurality of individual noises, tones and voices. They tell us something about a situation or the surroundings, they “pull you in” (“birthday-party”, “arrival at the airport”, “circus”). Individual noises (“champagne cork plops”, “phone rings”, “car door bangs”) give pointers and can even structure a montage. Most of the time the noise is shortly left “standing alone” before describing, if necessary, what is happening in a text or interview passage. – You can also add a background noise to an interview passage or text to create the impression the clip was recorded in those acoustic events. (For example if you add eating noises to a passage, people will think it was recorded during eating.) – You can also play colourful atmospheric noises (e.g. “dance contest”) again and again like in a sequel.

Recording Noises and Sounds

Recording noises and sounds is a question of experience. Try: Recording, listening to the recording, analysing mistakes and, if need be, repeating the recording differently.

Record at least two minutes of sound effects at a time! This way you can use the recordings also with longer texts.

Particularly good are acoustic transitions: from inside to outside, from outside to inside (e.g. Entering a church from a street)

Technical Considerations

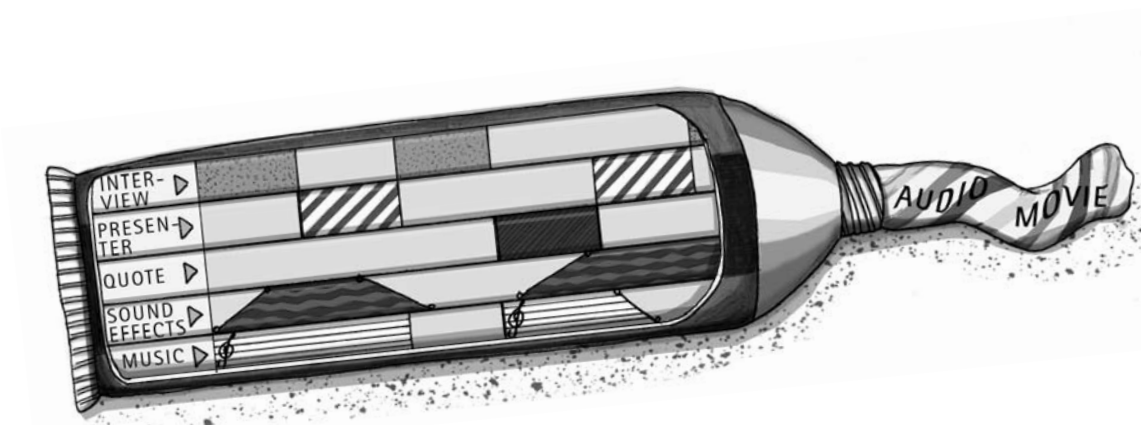
- with a stereo microphone you can achieve better surround effects.
- Hold the cable so that there are no cable noises.
- Be careful with the recording level. If possible don’t readjust but rather change the distance of the microphone to the source of noise.
- Be careful with wind! Block the micro, e.g. with your back, with your hand.

Writing a Manuscript

When producing in the studio it is usually easier if you have turned your “keyword plan” into a manuscript on which clips and full texts are noted in the right order. You can write your texts faster, better and more accurately if you know the beginning and ending of your selected interview passages – so it is best to take notes.

A large font size is handy, at least 1.5 spacing, spacious pagination (never start a new page in the sentence of a presentation text), only write on one side of the page.

Tip: write how you breathe – that means read the text aloud and word-wrap the text after every breath. This way the lines relate to the meaning of the text and reading it becomes easier.



In the Studio: Speaking Texts, Importing Clips and Noises, Editing and Mixing

In the studio you make an audible montage from your plan. You read your texts, import the interview passages and edit them, import your music and noises, mix them and see about having nice transitions. Now listening is decisive. In most radio stations the production is carried out by computer with an audio editing programme. The individual programmes work differently and it would be best to attend a course, to get to know the programme in question.

This is what you should always pay attention to:

- An audio file consists of several individual files. Be careful to save an audio file (wav) with all your files! Only in the audio file actual acoustic material is saved.
- When you speak your texts: Rehearse beforehand – read your text aloud. In doing so you notice what still needs to be changed. Be careful when speaking to sit or stand in a good position, so that your breath can flow “freely”. Try to picture what you are saying while you are speaking. Control the distance to the microphone and the right recording level before recording the text.
- When you edit your clips, i.e. cutting slips of the tongue, unnecessary sentences etc.:
 - Listen carefully if the naturally sounding rhythm of speech is kept (leave pauses to breathe, to think over etc.) There can be changes in your planning. It could be that an interview passage does sound better when leaving the concluding sentence in etc.
- You arrange you montage in several tracks. It is clearer to have individual and separate tracks for interview passages, translations, texts, music and noises. Because, only when you have elements on different tracks can you mix them. That is why it can also be better to have two interview tracks.
- With music and noises you now decide on the final length and mix according to your sense of hearing.