

Essence of speaking a script

By Benson Idonije

The single voice technique, by nature, can be boring, monotonous and uninteresting to the listener or viewer, especially when he has to contend with a large mass of words. The broadcaster needs to take pains in the storing up of these words on paper, and more importantly, lifting them from storage and communicating effectively, speaking them to make himself comprehensible. And this is the only way he can carry the audience along.

Unfortunately, some fine programmes go on air which are lost to the largest audience while the producer, oblivious of the failure of his broadcast, feels satisfied that he has done the greatest thing ever known. We should not be deceived by the underserved encomiums from friends who themselves do not comprehend what he is saying, but merely want to placate him. As a result he is given a serious sense of false security and satisfaction which eventually lead to the enthronement of mediocrity. Only the truth can develop the individual, and in turn the entire industry so that the desired excellence can be achieved.

One of the programmes that provoked this observation is "Book Review", a talks programme that currently enjoys air time on Ray Power 100FM. To be specific, two voices narrated the review of "Towards a better Nigeria" written by Mike Okoye and broadcast on the February 10, 1996. In the first place, I find the idea of two narrators unsuitable for logically communicating the thought, ideas and general sequence of a book. The two narrators read their lines poorly and did not communicate because it was treated with triviality.

Having read a book for appreciation and judgment, one person should be left to do the analysis of its evaluation, speak the script and talk to the audience in a friendly convincing manner and conversing with them in the way he would talk to his friends in normal every day interaction.

All the sports magazines and programmes on our radio and television stations usually employ the mass of words and should be mindful of the boredom they inflict on the audience.

"Net work sports" for instance usually opens with a long introduction that rightly builds up by establishing backgrounders for each episode. In the process, presenter generally reviews sports activities for the previous week to prepare the minds of viewers for the days proceeding. He also discusses the highlights of what to expect in the days package all of which is flawlessly read. But smooth as it usually sounds, there are no safeguards to break the monotony of this mass of words in terms of sign posting illustrations and humour to carry the viewer along. Presentation can be more conversational, natural, chatty and made more interesting.

"Milo World of Sports" carries a daily package of sporting activities the world over. It can be hectic sourcing for materials on daily basis, but usually the programme comes across loaded with relevant information. Presenter usually has a lot to say, and I must commend him for taking pains to write scripts and read them flawlessly. But the programme will go down better if the script is spoken and some light heartedness is introduced to presentation to break the monotony, rigidity and boredom of the monologue.

The one from OGBC 2 is not free from presentation deficiencies even though the presenter is quite knowledgeable about sports. In terms of production, the programme usually includes human stories, featurettes and elements of humour scripted with creativity and imagination; Some times he plays music for relevance and to capture established moods, but delivery does not do proper justice to the projection of the entire package in terms of effective communication.

I heard a developmental programme on Radio Nigeria 2 last week. Titled "Lagos City rat," it focused on the Nigeria Police who do not seem to be truly protecting the populace. The script was very well written, and quite an effort was made to speak it, but the instrumental music intended to ease boredom under voice was too strong. Desirable though the music was, it needed to be suppressed for the valuable information to really come across.

The attention span of the average person is not more than three minutes after which he starts to desire a change; and if it does not come in terms of variety or making the programme interesting, the tendency is for him to tune to another frequency or channel, in this day and age when alternatives are many.

A script is only a written broadcast; it is meant to be spoken for the proper comprehension of the desired target audience.