

## **Methods of Multilingual Programming**

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In communication multilingualism is part of every-day life: Youngsters from a migrant background grow up with two languages and use them to create their own language (e.g. "Kanak Sprak" – the language of German – Turks), anglicisms are integral part of pop culture as well as computer language. Most radio programmes at stations of public broadcasting and commercial stations are monolingual.

On the frequencies of community radios, however, there has been multilingual broadcasting for years: often owing to the need to implement one's own language reality also in the own show.

The "side effect" is that more listeners are reached. So that the show sounds good the design, i.e. the method that is used in multilingual programming should match the content of what you want to bring across. Accordingly, a word-by-word translation is suitable to pass on information very accurately. Methods that are of experimental nature, however, particularly encourage associative listening. The methods of multilingual programming were developed by the Babelingo team in a series of seminars. Dr Brigitta Busch, from the University of Klagenfurt, has published findings on the topics. Basis for the methods that have been collected here is the handout by the Babelingo team which also contributed to the project "Inter.Media – Module II: „Methods of multilingual Programming."

## **Methods of Multilingual Programming**

### **Word-by-Word Translation**

Everything that is said is fully translated into another language. This way accuracy is ensured. But, it is also a very time-consuming method and it can be exhausting and tiring for the listeners because they either hear everything twice or they have to wait a long time until they can understand something again.

**Potential uses:** Literal translation can be recommended when information is to be repeated exactly in another language, e.g. news stories or other similar compressed, concise news items. The individual takes (in one language) should not be too long. Listening is easier if languages change more often. Word-by-word translation can also be recommended in intercultural situations when the point is to have all parties participate equally in having their say and understanding.

### **Summarising**

The content of longer passages is summarised in one (or more) other languages. This method is similar to word-by-word translation as here also longer speech items alternate. The summary can be detailed or less detailed according to context and requirements.

**Potential uses:** presentation with two presenters in a bilingual show. Prerequisite is that both presenters speak both languages. This method is very suitable for translating (live) interviews: the host poses his/her question in both languages, the guest answers in his language and the interviewer summarises the answer in the other language. This method has a very vivid effect, particularly in live shows.

### Reframing, building links

Here the point is not to translate but passing contents and statements on from one language to the next. This can take place through an introductory question or a short resume. This way links are built from one language to the other. All participating presenters must understand all languages in use for this – the listeners not necessarily. The team has to be well-established and expert at changing from one language to the other. This kind of reframing is widely used in parts of Africa because people speak several languages in everyday-life side by side. It is a very smart and dynamic way of multilingual programming that is fun to listen to. Listeners who only understand one language are able to follow the show even if they do not understand everything. Listeners who understand all languages do not get bored because nothing is repeated. It is important, however, to take care that central information is always passed on into the other language.

**Potential Uses:** presentations (with two presenters), live discussions.



### Example for building language links:

So that the listeners „stay tuned“ who only understand one language, it is important that the presenter Betty takes up what has been said, e.g. “The motivations for radio programming are manifold for our guests in the studio, Mr XY, who exactly do you want to reach?”

### Turn-Taking: Continuous presence of different languages

Turn-taking means that two languages are spoken in turns, in doing so the presenters try to create a balance between languages in the show. Using different languages is part of the show’s concept without taking care to comply strictly with translating, summarising or building links. So, it can happen that listeners do not understand at certain times but other parts of the show are devised in all languages, like for example local events. It can also have the result that both languages can be heard simultaneously.





**Potential Uses:** If this method is to be used regularly it is suited best for shows whose producers can assume that the listeners more or less understand both languages. This means that when changing between languages you do not have to take care to transfer meaning. This can be the case in multilingual countries or regions but also within immigrant communities.

**Example:** broadcasting a football game with two presenters who speak different languages and are watching the same game and comment in their respective language. Sometimes they communicate with each other and refer to each other. When it gets particularly gripping each comments in his/her own language, sometimes even at the same time.

Possible elements of multilingual shows are also music, audio art or collages that can be understood by all listeners, irrespective of language.

### Language Games and Language Art

Not the information plays the lead role but experimenting with languages themselves. Language serves as a design element in artistic and experimental respect. Listening routines can be deconstructed, reflected on and broadened. New ways of listening, new methods of multilingual programming and even new languages can develop from this.

**Potential Uses:** Collages, radio plays.

### Music

While music per se is not a language that is accessible and understandable for all listeners – music can bring across a lot, particularly on emotional level. Multilingual presentations can be accentuated and illustrated by a subsequent piece of music. The listeners get to know a lot about a particular life-style or a special perspective on this associative level – and also about similarities in different every-day lives. Music also has an important function for the show design: the rhythm of a piece of music can link different language presentations on a sound level. Because of this, changes of language have a rhythmic effect and are not felt as clashes. Monolingual listeners are not just “given the slip” but can adjust more easily to listening to the sound of the foreign language.

## ***Symbolic presence of language***

This refers to short linguistic excursions into one or more languages. Purpose is not to communicate something in this other language. The language's presence carries the meaning: it can be a reference to the majority language of the country from which it is broadcast; it can be a greeting to those who are also listening. Presenters also state something about themselves and their cultural background.

**Potential Uses:** Welcoming and saying goodbye in a show, particularly in presentations.

## **Code-Switching, Language-Hopping**

This is about the symbolic presence of languages in shows that are actually monolingual. Code-switching and Language-hopping often occurs unintentionally. With Language-hopping there is no translating or summarising in a different language but one changes over to the other language suddenly and unconsciously. This happens when the language situation changes through a phone call or a guest in the studio, or when presenters switch to another language because they can only think of certain terms in this language. Code-switching refers to an unconscious usage of scientific terms or terms in other languages in every-day life or slang.

**The term Potential Uses** does not really apply here as Code-switching and Language-hopping occur unknowingly most of the time. You can often hear this in shows of second generation immigrants who grew up bilingually and often switch between languages unconsciously in every-day life. In call-in-shows you adjust to your caller;

In music shows titles and special terms of a music style are included in the language in which it was created (Spanish for flamenco, English for Blues etc.).

## **Voice-Over**

This is about a montage method of literal translations and recorded interviews that are used in pre-productions of montages, contributions and features. The original is to be heard shortly then it fades into the background and the translation sets in. This sounds quite smart but the two languages are not to be heard equally. There is a language hierarchy because you can only understand one language. The second language has symbolic presence. In a montage the short playing of an original interview clip documents that a one-on-one interview has indeed taken place. The clip also portrays information about the emotional expression of what is being said, the voice of the narrator and the atmosphere.

**Potential Uses:** In monolingual, previously produced montages, contributions or features in which there are interviews in different languages.