Experimenting with AD for in house TV productions: *THUIS*
An example from Flanders

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STARTING POINT & ACTION RESEARCH

Action research:

- Growing demand

- VRT's government contract/quota/budgets/test ADs

- Department Applied Linguistics/Translators & Interpreters - research

BASIC HYPOTHESES

- *Thuis* : specific AD strategies possible
- Quality, speed, efficiency AND talking book

Short-term:

- Narrow down number of choices
- Offer standard options
- Adapt current website
- Collaboration with producers

Long-term:

- Development of an AD memory

THUIS: Introduction

- Broadcast by VRT "één" since 23 December 1995
- Monday to Friday, prime time
- Watched by 1 million on average & all ages
- Characters from all walks of life grouped in families
- Varied Flemish-Dutch linguistic register
- Story-lines carried mostly by dialogue

MAIN INTEREST

- Typical, sometimes *risqué* soap story-lines
   of intrigue & emotion

THUIS: Introduction (2)

EPISODES: FOUR PARTS

- RECAP: short excerpts/two-three turn conversations
   previous instalment

- CREDITS: Presentation character/visuals & text on screen/music

- EPISODE : 5 types of actions

- ANTICIPATION: snippets of next episode/
   - dialogue/ + music

EXTENSIVE WEBSITE: http://www.een.be/programmas/thuis

- Among others: presentation characters

THUIS: **Introduction (3)**

EPISODE

- Lasts 35 mins, 12 to 15 scenes

- Mostly with 2-3 characters/some group scenes

- Limited number of locations & time continuum

- People connected to places

- Scenes centred around one core conflict

- Emotional content = content

- Virtually all actions subservient to emotion

- Some actions narrative/realist function

- Scenes & episodes end on cliff hangers

MORE DETAILED RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) Most time-effective way to describe RECAP, CREDITS, ANTICIPATION?

2) How accessible is current WEBSITE?

3) Most time-effective way to describe the EPISODES?

4) Most effective interaction/cohesion between the three?

FIRST ANALYSIS & SUGGESTIONS

1) Character descriptions & clips on the website

2) Beginnings & endings of episodes

1) Character bionotes & clips on the website (my translation)
http://www.een.be/programmas/thuis/thuis-de-personages

Simonne Backx (Marleen Merckx)
http://www.een.be/programmas/thuis/simonne-backx-marleen-merckx

Simonne is Yvette's daughter. She and Frank have one son, Franky. A few years ago she met her father Stan, who was one of Yvette's puppy loves. Simonne has always had a very good relationship with Frank's mother, Florke, who has meanwhile passed away and with Florke's husband Rogerke. When she needs someone to talk to, she can rely on her best friend Julia.

In the past, Simonne has always turned a blind eye to Frank's numerous affairs However, when her former husband, Herman,wanted to spend his last days with her, the temptation was too strong and Frank left her. In spite of all this the two are together again.

At Franky's wedding, Simonne was hit by a car, driven by Femke. The revalidation is difficult but she is strong and holds on. She develops into a regular business woman and takes over Leo's taxi company with Peggy. After a complete revalidation, she too gets into a taxi again. Her own son informs her that he will remain in America but she creates a home for Lowie, Jana and Bram.

Conversation clip: Simonne & Frank

The AD is mine (not provided with the clip)

http://www.een.be/programmas/thuis/simonne-backx-marleen-merckx

Evening. Simonne is at home, she's sitting on the sofa when Frank enters carrying a bunch of flowers, and the door slams shut.

Frank: Here you go. Flowers. And because flowers are not enough I'm also giving you a voucher.
Simonne: But…
Frank: Here you go, here you go.

Simonne opens the envelope containing the voucher and reads:

Simonne: A romantic night for two in the Zus & Zo.
Frank: Do you think you would still enjoy that? With the biggest asshole of Belgium and beyond?
Both: mmmmmm
They kiss.

Questions: BIONOTE

- How far back into the past does it need to go?

- How clear is the short bionote with such abundance of details?

- No physical description of the character is given (age,style,features,..)

- No connection between character-place or places given

Remark:

Viewers have a photo and short clip featuring the character

Questions: CLIP

- Features Simonne AND Frank

- Franks' presence explained by bionote

- If viewer/listener has read the bionote

- Clip is not placed in time/related explicitly to bionote.

- Frank is dominant and talks most

Conclusion:

There are cohesion problems in the way clip and bionote complement each other (or not) and problems for blind users who watch the clip only

Tentative solutions: BIONOTE & CLIP

BIONOTE	
Light version $	**Full version $$$**
Keep the bionote & add a character description, link the character to its most "common" location. Add a line to explain the scene in the video.	Restructure and simplify the bionote & add a character description, link the character to its most "common" location. Add a line to explain the scene in the video.
Comply with "any surfer": website readable with software	Comply with "any surfer" AND add a spoken interactive version of the bionote, read by the character, Simonne, in the present case.
CLIP	
Keep the clip	Choose another clip in which Simonne is more prominent
Add a caption to the clip: A few years ago. Simonne and Frank at home, making up.	Add a caption under the clip briefly setting the scene.
	Choose a clip from the instalments still to be produced with AD and put it on the website with the AD.

2) Beginnings & endings of episodes
(3658, 3572)

- Dialogues carry virtually ALL information

- Focus of the episodes: emotional intrigues

Main function of the AD:

- Contribute to the setting (where/who/movements)

- Ensure emotions/intrigues come across/are enhanced

Strategy

- Make the most of beginnings and endings

= **a frame to optimise dialogue**

Introductions & Endings: Examples (test ADs)

Introductions

3568	
a. In de keuken van *Zus en Zo*. Waldek schenkt zich een glas in.	*In the kitchen of the* Zus & Zo. *Waldek pours himself a glass*
b. Peter en Tom in hun bureau. Nancy poetst en luistert mee.	*Peter and Tom in their office. Nancy is cleaning and listens in.*

Introductions & Endings: Examples (test ADs)

Endings

3572	
c. Peggy trekt zich met een blije glimlach terug.	*Peggy retreats with a happy smile*
d. Ze schrijdt weg en laat Mayra perplex achter.	*She marches off, leaving Mayra speechless.*

First tentative ideas

Website: **mini** & max solutions

- More efficient organisation of information

- Add visual info about character & its location

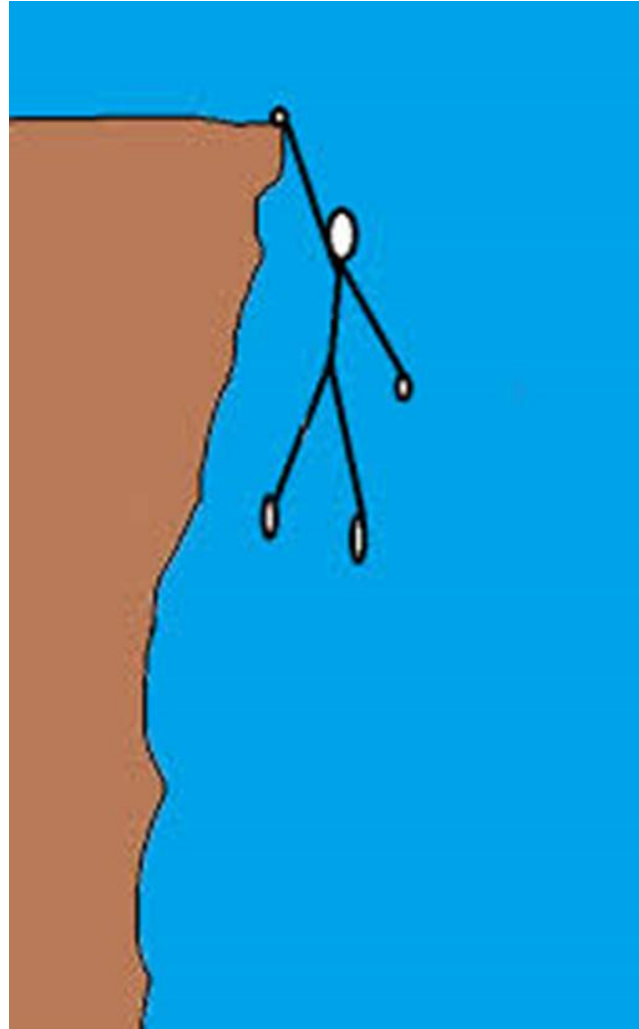- Connection between bionote & clip

- Caption under clip

Series: beginnings & endings

- Beginnings: info about the setting

- Endings: add cliff hanger emotions

Producers:

- Invest website/season & control editing

To be continued…

Thank YOU for your attention

AND

with thanks to the entire VRT team

and

LUDO SCHATS more in particular

References

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THUIS website: http://www.een.be/programmas/thuis