Digital Film School
Location interview

Janet

There are some great stories out there and given the right conditions most people can tell them naturally. However it's not always that easy in front of a camera.

John voiceover

In this video we will look at how to conduct an interview and how to get the best from the subject. This will include some technical issues such as sound and lighting, but just as important is whether you can help someone feel comfortable in telling their own story fluently.

Janet

Whilst setting up an interview it helps to be aware of just how many different things are going on. It's one of those situations where it's really helpful to get somebody else involved.

John voiceover

We are going to use an example of an interview from some media training that Janet and I offer. Where Open University academics get the opportunity to put together a show reel.

Janet

So, could you tell me who you are and what it is that you do?

Rosa

I'm a lecturer in biological ………..

John voiceover

The interview took place at The Open University in the main cafeteria because it visually linked to Rosa's topic and was available and fairly quiet.

For the interview we were able to use strong natural daylight coming through the windows, which was mixed with the artificial light from the building – so we didn't need to set up any studio lights.

Whilst the camera is being set up, Janet spends time with Rosa to go over the questions and help her relax.

We rigged Rosa up with a clip-on microphone to get good sound. A radio mic is good for picking up the sound of the person it's attached to but the interviewer's voice will be poorly recorded. This was fine as the purpose of this interview was to get self-contained answers from the interviewees.

Another option is to use a boom pole with a directional mic. This means that the mic can be placed close to whoever is talking.

Eyelines are very important. As a general rule it is good if people look just to the side of the camera towards the interviewer.

Janet will stay quiet whilst Rosa speaks to keep the interviewee's sound 'clean' and thus allowing additional editing options. To show she is interested in the interview she keeps eye contact and occasionally nods in agreement.

However, in this clip we wanted to show you how to conduct an interview with the interviewer on-camera too so we added Janet's parts afterwards.

With two or more people, eye lines are even more important. If they don't match it can look very wrong. The basic rule is that the camera stays on one side of an imaginary line that is drawn between the centre of the two subjects. Whichever side of the line I film from will give me editable material. If I 'cross the line' the subjects, when edited together will look like they are speaking to someone else.

Rosa

I was always interested in the kind of bridge between psychology and biology so how do biological factors influence our behaviour? And when I studied my masters degree I then regularly shifted more towards psychological subjects and I did an internship in Cambridge at the Autism research centre and that's where I really got hooked to academia and autism research in particular.

John Voiceover

For her show reel, Rosa also did a piece to camera, which was more challenging and required extra preparation. She was very good but still needed encouragement and support. As doing several takes we still had to remind her to smile.

To introduce movement into the piece, I decided to do a tilt up from the food in the café as Rosa walked into shot talking. Once she had finished, she exited the on the right side of the

frame. When she enters into the next shot it would edit nicely if she were to enter from the left hand side.

Because the Open University training was for OU employees there was no need for consent forms but we did give them the opportunity to look at the show reels for their approval.

It's worth remembering that you need many heads in production and that if you are lucky enough to have some help the key to success is good communication.