

AC-T- Cadence

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0:00:00.6 Becky Parker Geist: Hello, and thank you so much for joining me today. I've been thinking a lot about cadence, and so that's what I'm gonna talk about today on our podcast, there are a number of different contexts in which we can consider cadence and how we use it in audio-book narration. And so we'll dive in, will start at the point where I am most spending my time right now in my energies in terms of working with cadence, and that is in the context of a full cast audio book production. So let's jump in with full cast productions, in the process that we've developed for the projects that we work on at Pro Audio voices, a part of our process is to do a director's edit... Now, we do this partly because I love this kind of project, and so the assembly of it is really thoroughly enjoyable to me, and I love doing this aspect of it, and in this context, cadence has partly to do with the cadence of the way each narrator speaks but it has more to do really with the cadence of the overall scenes, what I'm really talking about is the flow of the narrative in a full cast production, especially when there are many different voices, it's important that the listener know who is speaking and early on in the audio book, even if the voices are fairly distinct, we need to still build up that recognition in the early phases, so there are going to be more attributions, more times when we let the listener know who is speaking, even though they're hearing a different voice early on, we're not going to expect them to immediately recognize which voice that is...

0:02:13.8 Becky Parker Geist: Which character in the story? So we're gonna have more of these attributions. Well, there is a certain cadence that flows well, when we include an attribution and getting the timing just right so that it doesn't trip up the listener, it's not something that we want them to be consciously paying attention to, it's more like a subconscious reminder... It is conscious, but it's more like an undertone, a gentle reminder of parenthetical, if we say... We have one character say their line, Oh, I didn't do that. And then we have, Bryan said, the change in the tone and the cadence, the way that it is put together with the spacing just right. Is a part of this really, I think, important part of the assembly of a project. This is also true for projects that are not full cast, but I'm currently working on Joseph directs project fight or flight, a South Side Story, where we have 18 actors and we will be inserting music and sound effects in appropriate places through the overall project. Right now, we're working on just the voice-over, so just the narrative piece of the project, and just to be clear, there are 18 actors, but there are more characters than there are actors, many of the roles are played like one person, one actor playing just one role, but we also have several who are playing more than one role, so as I'm doing the director's at it, I am really attending very carefully to the spacing, the cadence between the line that is said by the actor and the attribution that is then placed, and I wanna dive in a little deeper than normal to this very small detail...

0:04:37.3 Becky Parker Geist: You may think of it as small. To me, it is an important detail, Here's what can happen if we have the line of a character and then the pause is too long before we hear who said it, and I am literally talking about part of a second... I'm not a whole second, not one or two seconds, we're talking about small fractions of seconds, hundreds of seconds, that can make the difference between the flow sounding natural and the flow sounding stilted, or even if not stilted, a kind of stumbling point. It's a little bit like we're trying to keep the cadence or the pacing of the phrasing before, so that the mind of the listener can incorporate the attribution information without having to change cadence. And sometimes this can be a problem, especially in situations where, let's say we've done a recording session and one actor wasn't able to attend and another actor is doing the attribution for their line. In a case like that, we may have an actor who chooses to read the line, the dialogue line at a slower pace, but the main narrator may be going at a quicker clip, so I'll just give...

0:06:17.3 Becky Parker Geist: This is not an actual example, but an example of what this could sound like, I don't know where I'm going crazy legs said, or in the opposite direction, we might have the dialogue piece be at a faster clip and the attribution be considerably slower. So here's another example with the same words, I don't know where I'm going, crazy legs said. Can you hear how there's a bit of a disconnect that as a listener, it feels like they're disjointed because they're at a different pace, different cadence. So that's what I'm talking about, trying to line up some of these in terms of the cadence of the different actors, but also just the placing, so now I'm going to insert a couple of samples of how I think the placement should go for a couple of lines and then how it would sound if it were not placed quite so... Well, here are some examples.

0:07:30.5 S2: What happened to that microwave Jeff asked. We picked up the pieces. Crazy Legs said, train's gonna ditch it when he gets home.

0:07:39.4 Becky Parker Geist: Now, in this example, ideally, the Crazy Legs said would have been a... Just a slightly slower pace. It's close, but if it were perfect, it would have had just that little bit more, so we're talking about really super fine tuning, I'm gonna take that one now and I'm gonna adjust the pauses so that you can hear what it would sound like if the cadence overall was off...

0:08:07.1 S2: What happened to that microwave? Jeff asked, we picked up the pieces. Crazy Legs said, train's gonna ditch it when he gets home.

0:08:17.4 Becky Parker Geist: So you can probably hear that creating too much space between the dialogue and the attribution makes it sound kind of weird, it's like there's something off about it. Now I'm gonna do the opposite direction, I'm gonna pull them even tighter, so you can hear what that sounds like...

0:08:35.5 S2: What happened to that microwave Jeff asked, we picked up the pieces. Crazy Legs said, train's gonna ditch it. When he gets home.

0:08:44.0 Becky Parker Geist: In that example, can you hear how the spacing between the dialogue and the attribution is very tight, but then the spacing between that and the next piece of dialogue is longer, so that's where you're really gauging your cadence and trying to get it all lined up, the spacing, when it's very tight, can work as long as you're making it work as a consistent piece, in other words, you're establishing a cadence that works for the entire scene, and just to be clear, not every scene should be at exactly the same pace, especially with action books, it's really, probably most clear in that genre how... It's really helpful to sort of pick up that pace, to increase that tension in the scenes where there's more action going on, let's do one more short example from the same project...

0:09:52.1 S2: Good thing we ran so fast, he said as he slid the key into the doorknob lock.

0:10:00.2 Becky Parker Geist: Because we were doing this in a recording session, the actors were nicely matching their cadence during the recordings, in the post-production process, the editing that was working very well. Here are some ways that I could have messed it up.

0:10:17.2 S2: Good thing we ran so fast, he said, As he slid the key into the doorknob lock.

0:10:25.1 Becky Parker Geist: Hopefully can hear how that pause was really a little too long. Here's what it sounds like, if we tighten it up too much.

0:10:34.3 S2: Good thing we ran so fast, he said as he slid the key into the doorknob lock.

0:10:41.0 Becky Parker Geist: And even with that one, because we're not hearing the rest of the context, the spaces before and after. It can work, but that one feels a little tighter than it needs to be, let's take a short pause here, we'll come back and we'll talk about other kinds of projects, not just full cast, but ways that cadence makes a difference in some regular single-narrator projects.

Okay, so taking a look or listen to some single narrator projects, and this is, again, we're gonna be talking about fiction because that's where we most often are dealing with these kinds of cadence issues for non-fiction authors and material we'd be talking about cadence mostly in relation to the field that you want for your book, the conversational feel part, perhaps the natural cadence of the authors speaking and or writing. Let's stick with fiction for now, with a single narrator, most of these cadence issues are going to be addressed during the recording, but there's a fair amount that actually can happen in post-production that can either fix things, make them sound even better or miss them up. And I don't mean mess them up in that makes them wrong, but mess them up in terms of what the author prefers...

0:12:23.0 Becky Parker Geist: We did have a project where the author was narrating and the editor was tightening up the pauses consistently, it sounded good, but the author was really planning for an intending, a more measured, slower pace. And she was narrating. So when we did the first sample, that first 15 sample, we were able to identify right off the bat real early that the editor just needed to be informed that, No, we're actually intending that slower pace, and then it all worked out smoothly from there. So that piece of communication was really valuable in terms of getting what the author wanted, adjustments in cadence and pacing often happen in the post-production process, so a narrator will do their reporting and many times they may speak right through without any additional pause, for example, or time, space between one paragraph on another, and the intention of the author typically when creating paragraphs is to separate them a little bit so that we have this idea of, this paragraph is one idea, concept, piece of the story, and another paragraph is another... Sometimes when we have a dialogue that's going quickly back and forth, maybe it's a high action scene, we don't want that additional space we want to...

0:14:12.0 Becky Parker Geist: That action taste speed between one paragraph on the next, but this is just to highlight, to bring to attention the fact that pacing is often adjusted or tweaked a little bit during the post-production phase of a project, and just as with attributions in a full cast project you have that same kind of issue that can happen in a single narrator project, the likelihood that their overall cadence is going to differ from one narrator to another, that kind of goes away, but there can still be spacing issues that will need to be addressed. The other thing I wanted to bring up in this episode is that cadence can also be a way for an actor narrator to differentiate from one character to another, just as we have options using our voices to make them a little more breathy, for example, or higher pitch or lower pitch, or maybe a little gruffer, or any number of other ways that we maybe make them more, a little more nasal, so that they stand out from each other. Cadence is another way that we can make this kind of differentiation, so one character maybe speaks with a little more pause or more it takes a little more time with his language, and you may have another guy who's just like really plowing through the words, are that he has is his dialogue.

0:16:03.9 Becky Parker Geist: Sometimes authors will give us the clues if the way that they're writing to help us understand if there is a character with a very different kind of cadence, and at other times it may just be one of the tools in the tool box for the narrator. And I think that's about all I wanted to cover for this episode, mostly, I think I wanted to make it really clear to highlight the fact that there are so many things that we are attentive to in the audio book production process, everything from the Narrator recording through the editor handling things in post-production, which reminds me, I wanted to just say that the samples that I put in that you listened to... We're not mastered. We are still in the director's edit phase, so you may have heard volume discrepancies that would have been that will be handled later in the process, there is so much attention to detail and attention to story, how can we bring it alive in the very best way that we're paying attention to in the audio book production process, if you have questions about what that's like, I would love to speak with you, you can schedule a call with me on our website at <https://proaudiovoices.com>.

0:17:35.9 S2: Thanks so much for listening.

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