

A Brief Introduction to the Vacational Studies Film Project 2009

This is a brief explanation of the film project Programme of Work that we will use this summer. There will be a detailed induction at the start of the Course. The induction will include a step-by-step explanation of the programme. We shall try to answer any questions you may have.

This summer, each class will participate in a film project that will make up approximately two-thirds of the academic content of the Course. Constantly adjusted and improved since its debut 3 years ago, the project has proved popular with our students across our age-range. The project involves clearly defined stages, some of which are, for example, analysing film genres, designing a plot, writing a script, rehearsal and, eventually, filming. The film our students create might be a documentary, a funny news programme or a soap opera. That is partly up to them, but mainly up to you, the teacher.

The DoS, Senior Teachers and returning teachers all have practical experience and can offer advice/guidance. Teachers new to us are welcome to put forward their ideas. There will be both student and teacher feedback at the end of the Course.

How do children learn English through a film project?

The film project encompasses all four language skills in a single context. Speaking and listening skills are developed through structured stages in which students have to work together to create the plot and discuss opinions. An analysis of professional film scripts will provide scope for developing reading skills, whilst written work will be focused on during script writing stages.

The rehearsal stage enables teachers to focus on phonological features of language such as pronunciation and intonation. Helping learners improve weak areas will give them greater confidence and enable them to become more proficient speakers. Learners' lexical range will be expanded throughout the project.

Grammar will be dealt with on an ad hoc diagnostic level. For example, if, through the film project, it becomes apparent that students are experiencing problems with question forms, then this information must be passed on to that class's other teacher (each class has one film project teacher and one conventional teacher) for the 'traditional' lessons taught every third day. Thus, students can, with the help of their conventional teacher, address that specific grammatical area.

Language learning through film-making contextualises the learning process and the actual skills so that the experience is enjoyable and memorable.

What approach will be adopted?

Conventional PPP lesson progress from accuracy to fluency. Our project uses a Task-based Learning (TBL) approach that instead goes from fluency to accuracy. Rather than focusing on a particular language target, language is acquired through a task that requires students to communicate. During the task, the teacher diagnoses weak areas, which can be pinpointed later on. This type of teaching puts greater focus on developing learners' communicative skills, an area that may be neglected in the student's own school.

How is the film project structured?

When you arrive, you will be given a detailed framework on which you can hang your lessons. The framework has been designed to minimise class preparation time. We think teachers are better

employed in face-to-face contact with students, giving them the chance to talk to native speakers so that they may quite possibly learn as much outside the class as in it.

A basic outline of the project.

- Stage 1: Introduction – Generating Interest
- Stage 2: What Makes a Good Film? – Analysis of Film Genres
- Stage 3: The Plot – Creating a Storyboard
- Stage 4: The Script – Process Writing Activity
- Stage 5: Rehearsals – Pronunciation, Word stress, Drilling...
- Stage 6: Filming – Consolidation
- Stage 7: Editing – That's a Wrap!

Remember. Although the end result may seem the most important for both students and teachers, the learning takes place during the preparation of the film. The emphasis should be on the process, not the product.

What equipment will be available?

The film will be recorded on digital cameras and memory cards provided by Vacation Studies. All equipment is distributed by the Senior Teacher. Some students may wish to use their own cameras. This is not a problem provided you TEST the camera first to assure compatibility in all areas.

Two teachers (i.e. two classes) will share one laptop computer throughout the Course. The computer will be used to store the film footage from the memory cards. This footage can be edited towards the end of the project using the Windows Movie Maker programme which is easy to learn and with which some of the children will be familiar. The final film must be shorter than 10 minutes (including any opening and/or closing credits) and must be saved as an '.avi file'. This enables the film to be uploaded to the Vacation Studies.

What should/shouldn't we do?

Although, making a film can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience, we need to take into account some important factors before starting.

| Things <i>not</i> to do | Rationale |
|---|---|
| Do not allow your students to type out the script on the computers. These should be either hand written by the students or if necessary, they typed out by the teacher. | <p>There are a limited number of computers and it may not be possible for every class to type up the script.</p> <p>Dominant students may change the film script without the consent of peers.</p> <p>Children should not be given responsibility for laptops.</p> <p>Children may use internet access for purposes other than the project.</p> |
| Do not take filming equipment such as cameras, tripods or memory cards without coordinating with | Equipment goes missing and it is the role of the Senior Teacher to keep track of it. |

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| the Senior Teacher beforehand. | |
| Do not expect to produce a Hollywood film. | It is the students' project and not a competition between teachers to create the best film. |
| Neither students nor teachers should leave the school without prior discussion with and permission from the Course Manager. | Fire safety regulations mean that the Course Manager needs to know exactly where teachers and students can be found. |

| Things you <i>should</i> do | Rationale |
|---|---|
| Keep to the deadlines for each stage. | This will help maintain interest throughout the project. It will also ensure that neither students nor teachers become overwhelmed towards the end of the Course. If you are struggling, let the Senior Teacher know. |
| Be open and seek help from peers. | Most teachers have interesting ideas and may be able to advise you on different aspects of the project. Some returning teachers have valuable hands-on experience. |
| Make sure students are aware of the plan of action for the following day. | This helps them to remain focused on the project. It also ensures that they are prepared for subsequent stages of the project, such as preparing costumes, before the class starts. |
| Keep track of your computer and lead. | Computers and leads go missing and it is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that these are kept in a safe place and ready for the next teacher to use. |

What should teachers do before the Course starts?

1. It may be advisable to write a list of questions or ideas that you would like to discuss during the induction session.
2. Teachers may wish to watch previous years' films. These can be found here:- [Sample movie](#)- and elsewhere on the VacStuds Facebook pages.
3. You may wish to read up on Task-Based Learning.

See you at the induction.
 Joe Littenberg
 Joe Wallace

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(Additional material by IGM)