VIDEO PRODUCTION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

MINI GUIDE

Divis
vision for learning

Education and Culture DG
Lifelong Learning Programme

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PAGES

INTRODUCTION

This mini guide has been designed to show you that there are many different ways of integrating video to support and deliver language learning in the classroom.

We have included lots of examples to help demonstrate this – both for video newcomers as well as for experienced video educators. This guide is only a summary of what we have developed.

Please go online to explore more ideas and examples and also to find out more about the background of our project: www.divisproject.eu

All our examples have been tested in the classroom to ensure that they can be easily integrated into normal teaching tasks and at the same time address a variety of different language and technical levels.

The equipment you are likely to need is usually readily available at school and you really don't need to have a great deal of technical experience to get started.

All the examples we use are designed so that much of the project work can be done outside of school time or set as homework.

Our overview gives you a framework of ideas to help you get started and support your video language skills development.

You will find examples for all levels but we suggest you start with the simpler exercises and build up your skills gradually.

We hope that you and your students will enjoy working through our ideas and we would be happy to receive your feedback and contributions.

You will find a contact form on our Divis website: www.divisproject.eu

Please contact us if you have any questions or problems or comments.

PREPARATION

- Still images & text
- Photo story
- Comics

FIRST STEP

- First contact with camera
- Camera technology
- Animation tricks
- Video concepts

SECOND STEP

- Video letters
- Video words
- Interviews
- Advertisements
- Short stories
- Drama plays
- Documentaries
- Television News

ACTION!

EDITING

© adapted from Masats, Dooly & Costa (2009)

PHOTO STORY

Photo Stories combine still images and text to tell a short story. Using the simple technique of digital photography and PowerPoint the students apply basic language skills in a multimedia text.

The photo story has proved to be a motivating task for both language students and teachers. It is also a useful introduction to video production.

Description

Photo stories are a fun and easy way to introduce both teachers and students to the basics of video production in foreign language learning.

They involve important elements of video production such as writing, imaging and editing but use less demanding, simpler techniques of digital photography and PowerPoint to create the final product. It therefore won't enhance digital competences in the same way as video production will.

The photo story enables the teacher to familiarise the students with the basics of video production, but these elements are optional and don't necessarily have to be covered in the foreign language classroom, where time is limited.

Lesson Plan

Target group	Age Group: 14 - 18
Foreign language skills necessary	A1
Skills necessary (digital)	None
Learning goals (linguistic)	• Use informal everyday vocabulary in a genuine setting • Become familiar with a new text genre
Learning goals (digital)	Basic understanding of video production: • Create a story • Write dialogues • Shoot digital photos • Transfer photos to a computer • Develop editing skills • Add speech bubbles to the photos
Equipment needed	• At least one digital photo camera • PowerPoint/photo story software • Video projector to show the final results

Examples

	Beginners - Create a photo story with PowerPoint (images and text).
	Intermediate - Create a photo story with free photo story software such as Photo Story (images, text and sound).
	Advanced - Create a photo story with video editing software such as Moviemaker (images, text and sound).

VIDEO WORDS

Video Words is specifically designed for primary schools. Words and phrases are filmed in short and simple video presentations. You can create and share your own online visual dictionary with other pupils and teachers around the world.

Description

Pupils present a few words from a chosen language, using a video camera. It's a simple idea and can be done in the classroom with the minimum of equipment.

It's easily accessible and lots of fun!

'Video words' is designed for teachers of native languages and foreign languages alike: pupils can present their own language or a foreign language that they are learning. The concept of sharing material is central to 'video words': we invite teachers to upload their productions and share them with the wider community.

As well as being an important contribution to intercultural and media education, it is also a great motivation for language learners: just think how much more interesting it is to see Spanish children presenting their own language using images from their everyday lives rather than simply reading about the language in school books. You can choose words which link with a theme you are already working on or you can join in with words and themes that other students have presented (check out our examples with different levels).

Lesson Plan

Target group	Age group: 6 - 12
Foreign language skills necessary	None
Skills necessary (digital)	None
Learning goals (linguistic)	• Become familiar with a foreign language (words, pronunciation) • Raise awareness for your own mother tongue • Raise awareness of the link between culture and language
Learning goals (digital)	Basic understanding of a recording plan (storyboard): • Basic handling of a video camera (or a stills camera / mobile phone with video function) • Basic sound recording • Transferring video footage to a computer • Basic video editing with free software such as Moviemaker or iMovie • Adding text and sound • Sharing videos online (Youtube)
Equipment needed	• At least one digital video camera • Video editing software • Video projector to show the final results

Examples

Video words can be produced at different levels depending on the age of the pupils and the amount of experience that both teacher and pupils have. It is central to 'video words' that the pupils themselves are the producers. It is therefore a good idea to start with more basic exercises and then progress from there, rather than starting on a higher level and ending up frustrated and with the teacher 'finishing the job'. We have designed the following three levels of complexity:

	Beginners - just words (no editing): simply record words, transfer the clips to your computer (without any editing) and upload them straight away. For this level, stills cameras with video function or newer cameras with flash or hard disc storage work well.
	Intermediate - edited words (words with titles and soundtrack): you can use the same approach as the beginner's level but add titles, subtitles and soundtracks while editing. Any video camera works for this, also the older tape-based cameras work well with most editing software.
	Advanced - short article (edited words with moderation): develop several word clips, with soundtrack and titles into a short article which includes a moderation (introduction, additional statements, conclusion).

SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS

School Presentations In this chapter the students prepare a promotional clip of their school in a foreign language.

The result can be shared with schools abroad – e.g. for finding or getting to know a partner school. School presentations can be very creative in style using themes such as storytelling, interviews, documentaries or funny sketches.

Description

The task is to make a two minute video to promote your school. This task has been selected for two main reasons: practicality of location and the final product can be used as a promotional tool for the school.

It is a perfect way of presenting your school to schools abroad, especially for international school partnerships. It is of course beneficial for students, teachers, parents, local communities and the media.

You can also use it for parents evenings or school open days. "School Presentations" is a helpful idea for the foreign language classroom. It puts language use in an authentic setting to a real audience.

Lesson Plan

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Target group	Age group: 10 - 18
Foreign language skills necessary	A2
Skills necessary (digital)	None
Learning goals (linguistic)	• Use specific vocabulary related to school in an authentic setting • Develop presentation skills
Learning goals (digital)	Basic understanding of video production: • Create a story (storyboard) • Film (basic handling of a camera) • Transfer video footage to a computer • Edit the video footage • Share final video online (Youtube...)
Equipment needed	• At least one digital video camera • Video editing software • Video projector to show the final results

Examples

There are no different levels – visit the Divis Project website to see some examples.

http://www.divisproject.eu
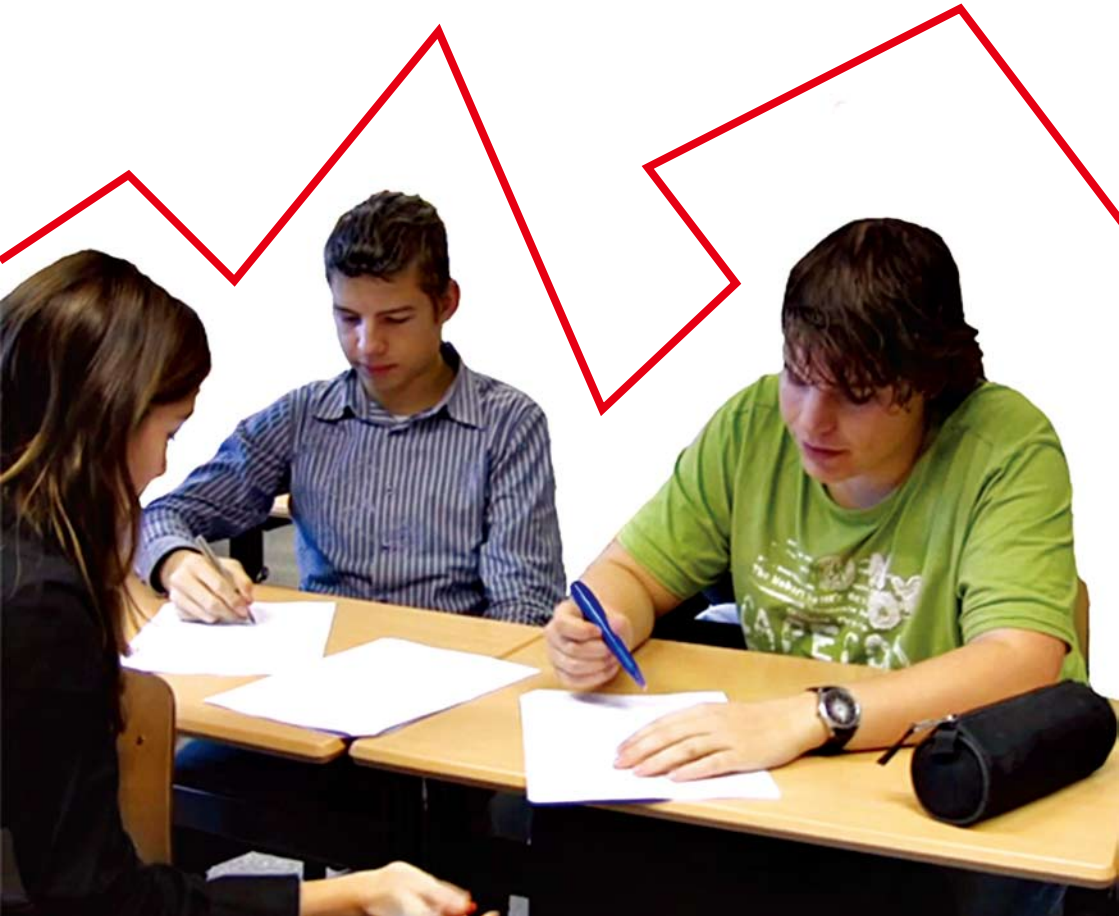
STAGING

Staging What do we mean by staging? Staging refers to the way students can perform feelings, actions, incidents, sayings, etc. When students perform, they play; which means that the performance is done in a safe environment, where they can be as inventive and creative as they like.

This is especially important for 13 – 18 year olds acting in front of the class (or a camera) which can be a real threat, especially when it is new to them. Therefore we start with a "performance", where every student can feel at ease.

Description

It is useful to introduce the drama project with a simple video clip. Students work in groups of 4 (or 5) and work out a story in 4 stills ("tableau vivant") in a chosen place: train station, swimming pool, concert, cinema, chemistry class, etc.

Example: A missing swim suit.

The slide is a still image; the students are not allowed to move. After this, more complex projects can be developed. In the example students perform a proverb in the foreign language.

Lesson Plan

Target group	Age Group: 10 - 18
Foreign language skills necessary	A1
Skills necessary (digital)	None
Learning goals (linguistic/ cultural)	• Getting familiar with basic drama techniques • Getting familiar with common proverbs in a foreign language or more sophisticated proverbs in the mother language
Learning goals (digital)	• Basic handling of a digital photo camera • Transferring your photos to a computer • Basic video editing with software such as Moviemaker or iMovie • Adding sound / titles
Equipment needed	• At least one digital photo camera • Video editing software • Video projector to show the final results

Examples

	Beginners - still images: create a story using still images.
	Intermediate - edited still images: add titles, subtitles and sounds and / or a voice-over to make the story more interesting.
	Advanced - video production: create a short drama story with optional titles, subtitles and soundtrack.

TELEVISION NEWS

Television News introduces another format in video production and language learning and promotion. The students can write short scripts and record them: in a corner of the classroom, with short additional images overlaid, with short interviews or articles recorded beforehand. They can produce the programmes in a foreign language or in their mother tongue.

Description

The main activity of the television news project is the writing of the script. This links well with the language classroom. If you would like to produce a television news programme using your mother tongue then you can take more care about the language of the news article. Encourage the students to work on formal language and write precise and informative scripts. The "W" questions can help to develop a good news script: *What? When? Where? Who?* ....

Decide on a theme for the whole programme and assign different news articles to different groups (three or four students per group) to make a full news programme. Themes can be related to different school subjects, school events, community events. You can also work on a combination of foreign language and other school subjects. Keep each news article below two minutes to keep the overall programme interesting.

Students can write their scripts as homework and record and / or edit the material after school if you are short of time. Allocate different roles such as presenter, camera operator, sound technician and director before you start the production.

Lesson Plan

Target group	Age group: 8 - 18
Foreign language skills necessary	A2 / B1
Skills necessary (digital)	None
Learning goals (linguistic)	• Apply a foreign language actively • Become familiar with the news text format • Support presentation skills – reading of the script
Learning goals (digital)	• Basic / advanced handling of a video camera (or a stills camera / mobile phone with video function) • Basic sound recording • Transferring your video footage to a computer • Basic / advanced video editing with free software such as Moviemaker or iMovie (optional) • Sharing your video online (Youtube....)
Equipment needed	• At least one video camera on a tripod, ideally an external microphone for better sound • Editing software (optional) • Video projector to show the final results

Examples

Beginners - one camera shot without video editing: just set up a very simple news studio in a room (classroom) with the camera on a tripod, edit the video "in camera" – just press start and stop for each of the articles and then present / share the footage afterwards.

Intermediate - edit programme with additional images/clips included: add additional images to your video (such as interesting still images related to the articles, short video clips with interviews) and edit the whole programme afterwards.

Advanced - film in different locations, edit: record news items on location, include interesting interviews and then edit the whole programme with the support of titles, subtitles and sound.

TECHNICAL

SUPPORT

Video survival kit This chapter will get you started with the video technology needed to follow our examples.

It is not meant to be an exhaustive technical tutorial but rather a reminder of the most important things to bear in mind. Don't feel that you, as the teacher, need to know everything about video production. In the modern world, this is no longer possible.

Don't hesitate to seek technical help from your students. You need to be clear about the concepts but you don't need to be able to operate all equipment. And don't think that you need to go out and buy the latest video cameras. You will probably have enough equipment available around you to get started.

At the same time you need to prepare your project in advance. There is nothing more frustrating than having to sort out the video technology during a lesson.

It is important that the tools/equipment you work with are compatible with one another, which unfortunately is often the biggest problem when working with video.

There are *three* things we would like to point out:

1. Technologies to record videos:

There are many mobile devices which can record videos: ***mobile phones, organisers, still cameras*** and ***computers with built in cameras***.

You can use any device but the video quality and more specifically the sound quality might vary. However, this is not the most important factor for first video projects.

Many teachers with whom we work use still cameras with satisfactory results. It can help to have one video recording device for each group of students but you can also work with just one camera if you make sure that you have a good system for sharing this camera.

2. Make sure that you can transfer your videos to the computer:

You need to check this before you start with your projects. The video material needs to be copied onto the computer before you can start editing.

There are basically ***two*** **different** procedures:

- ***For tape-based cameras*** (older models): a *"fire wire"* (also called IEEE 1394 or iLink) cable is necessary to copy the video footage on to the computer.

- ***For memory card cameras***: a card reader or a USB link is used to copy the footage on to the computer.

If you use the ***video function of a mobile phone*** you might be able to use *"Bluetooth"* to transfer the video clips to the computer.

3. Check that your editing software can import the transferred video clips:

Once all the video clips are saved on your computer (make sure that you remember where you have stored them!) you can import them into the editing software.

We normally use ***Moviemaker*** on the Windows platform as this software is usually included with all Windows computers (but if not you can download it for free from Microsoft) or ***iMovie*** for Macintosh computers (or Pinnacle Studio which was used by our Catalan school).

It is easier if no more than 3 students work on one computer at a time, so if you have a computer room, it would be a very good place to do video editing.

Editing can also be done on notebooks and this may be something that can be set as homework (especially for secondary school students).

Additionally we recommend that for *video projects* you also have available:

- an account to a video platform (youtube, vimeo, etc)

- internet access

- a video projector to show the final results

Go online for more support materials:
http://divisproject.eu

Using a video camera is straightforward. The technical requirements for using a video camera are very low and even primary school children can handle a camera without any problems. We would like to mention a few things here which might be helpful for your projects.

Preparation Here are a few things which are obvious but often get forgotten: make sure that the camera battery is fully charged before you start recording; a spare (charged!) battery is a useful accessory if you plan to record a lot of material; also make sure that the recording medium (tape, cards, ..) has enough space left on it for what you plan to do; and think of additional leads/cables if you want to watch the material on a monitor afterwards.
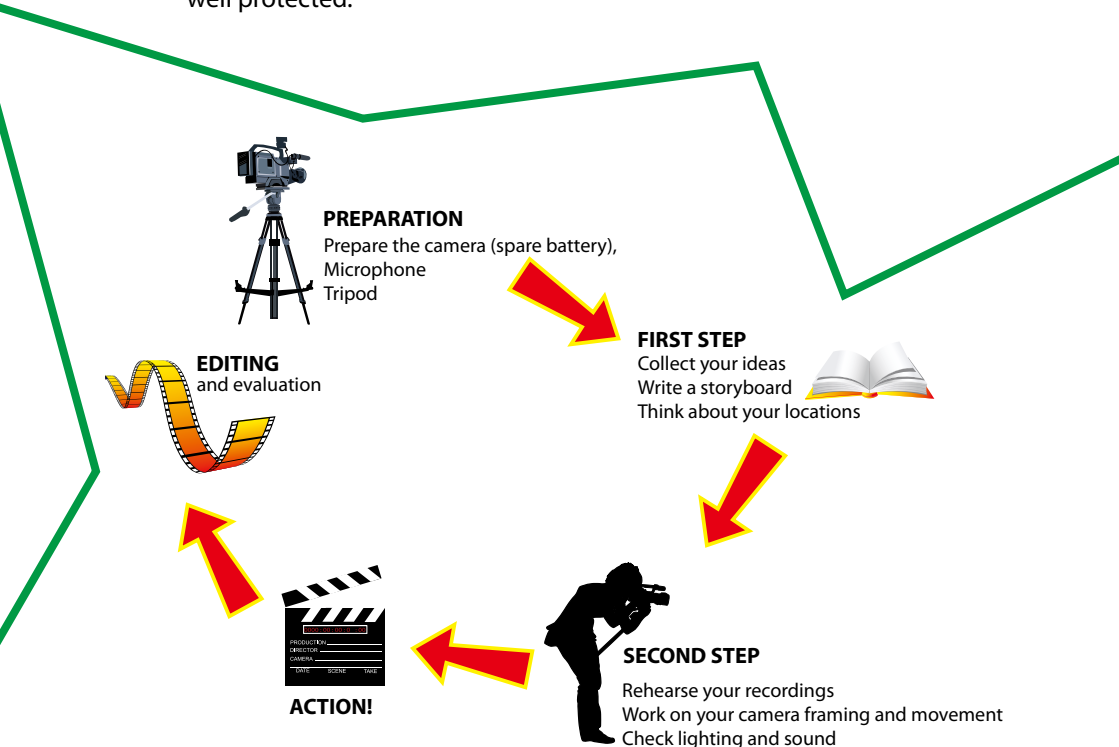
External microphones The sound quality of the videos for language projects is very important. An external microphone can help tremendously since it gets closer to the actor / presenter / sound source. Make sure that the batteries are charged and that the microphone is switched on. It is best to check the sound quality with headphones during the recording.

There is nothing more frustrating than lack of sound once all the recordings are finished. Alternatively, you can record a voice-over at the editing stage.

Zoom and pan It is tempting to use the zoom during the recording but we generally discourage students from using this feature. The zoom is very good for changing the focal length before you record but a change during the recording is often distracting. It can also make the editing harder. The same applies to constant panning or tilting. Younger children particularly often feel that they need to cover everything through rapid movements, but it is more important to concentrate on the main object within one camera frame.

Tripod A tripod can be very helpful for static shots and close ups. This is particularly the case if you work with younger children who find it harder to keep the camera steady in their hands. A tripod also allows more children to take part in the recording process by looking into the LCD screen together. Make sure that the tripod is sturdy enough, so that it cannot be knocked over too easily.

Safety of the camera A long strap attached to the camera is a good safety measure. Don't use the camera in wet weather unless it is well protected.

PREPARATION
Prepare the camera (spare battery),
Microphone
Tripod

FIRST STEP
Collect your ideas
Write a storyboard
Think about your locations

EDITING
and evaluation

ACTION!

SECOND STEP
Rehearse your recordings
Work on your camera framing and movement
Check lighting and sound

Video editing overview
Whenever you want to do some video editing you will need to go through the *three following steps*:

1. Capturing
Capturing means that the video material is copied on to the computer hard disc. With tape based cameras you do this in real time with a firewire (also called IEEE 1394 or iLink) cable.

Memory based camera materials can either be copied through a USB lead (especially hard disc and mini-DVD cameras) or by using a card reader (flash card cameras).

2. Editing the video material
Now you are ready to edit the material, the core activity. This is when you make the clips shorter, get rid of clips you don't want to use and/or change the order of the video clips. You can add visual effects such as colour or brightness, change and add video transitions such as wipes or blends.

Titles and subtitles can be overlaid on any videos or added at the beginning or end of the video. Sound effects and music can be added to make the message of the clip stronger.

3. Exporting your video film
Once all editing is finished the edited video will be exported. A new video file will be created, which can then be played independently from the editing software. This file is needed if you want to upload (stream) your video. The streaming portals give you directions about the compression parameters. The exporting process can be quite time consuming if you want a very good quality and you might need to export and upload the videos a few times if you are not satisfied with the end result.

A final note. Most editing programmes offer lots of video and audio effects. Many of these can be very interesting but you need to ensure that most of the editing time is not spent playing with effects and choosing fonts but on the actual content and message of the video clip.

Publishing your video
After exporting your film into a video file you can upload it on a video platform such as *youtube.com*, *teachertube.com* or *vimeo.com*.

To do so, you need to do the following:

1. Create an account with the streaming portal

2. Upload the video file

3. Give the file a title and a short description with a few keywords

The information you add about your video clip is important if you want other people to find your clip. If you just put in "our first video" it will be unlikely that anybody will find your film.

Think of appropriate titles (such as "Catalan words - body"), a good description of what the clip is about and some useful tags such as "Catalan, language, primary school". And make sure that you click on the appropriate category (such as "education").

Make sure that you observe privacy issues. Don't provide any personal details (this includes postal and email addresses)!

The streaming platform will give you a web address which you can copy and paste and share with students, family or colleagues. You can also embed the uploaded video onto your website or blog.

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