



Modern  
Language  
Teachers'  
Association  
of WA



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# Languages in the mainstream

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*“Let me tell you a story, let me tell  
you in my language”*

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Production Resource – Film Competition

# This Production Resource

This resource kit is provided to assist teachers by providing a structure to support students to create a short film for the ‘**let me tell you a story, let me tell you in my language**’ film competition. This resource is suitable for students in years 9 – 12.

## About the competition

Students tell an original story in two languages. One language must be English, the other a language other than English (i.e. spoken in the home and/or community). The story can be about any topic, can be true to storyteller’s life or fictitious. The story should be intercultural, i.e. conveying ideas and messages about the other language and its culture(s).

## Film requirements:

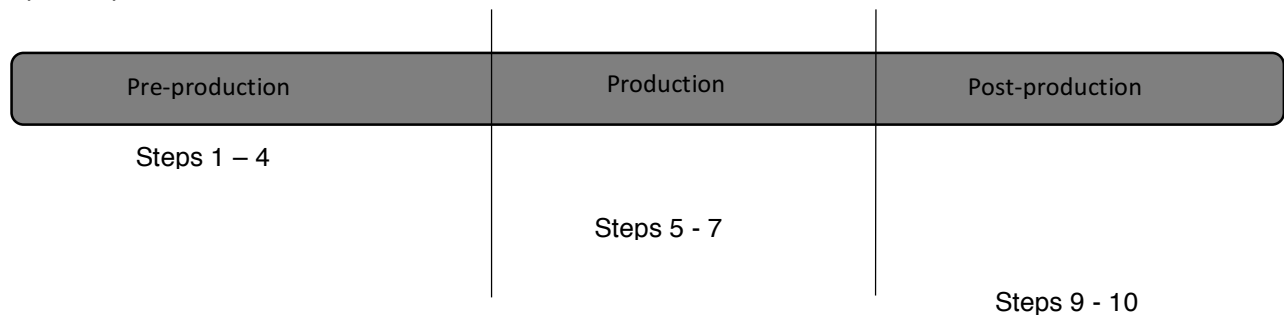
A bilingual **film** that has a spoken narrative in a language other than English, with written sub-titles in English. The film must not exceed **3 minutes** in duration. Assistance from adults can be sought, however it is essential that the content i.e. the story, images and spoken narratives (film and eBook audio files) be the work of the student(s). The story must be **original**, not a translation of an existing story.

# What do I need to know before I start?

## Teacher preparation:

- view short films of two to three minutes in length
- suitable films are those with a voice-over in mother tongue and subtitled in English
- create a timeline that shows students what needs to be completed and by when

A production timeline shows the stages of pre-production, production and post-production.



Teachers can facilitate students through the entire production process, or alternatively a student can work independently but should have check-in points with an adult overseeing the process.

## **Production steps:**

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Step 1 – Plan; write a narrative outline

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Step 2 – Know your equipment

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Step 3 – Script; write the voice-over and plan shooting

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Step 4 – Organise; visit locations, cast actors and plan costumes, prepare a production schedule

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Step 5 – Practise; do test shots and practice with equipment

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Step 6 – Shoot; follow shooting script and get coverage of the scenes

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Step 7 – Sound; record voice-over and find music and/or sound effects

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Step 8 – Edit; piece together footage using script as a reference, add voice-over and sub-title after images are edited

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Step 9 – Check; the voice-over can be clearly heard and sub-titles can be read, adjust as necessary, make sure music is copy-right free

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Step 10 – Deliver; export the project from the editing program and send to MLTAWA – Languages in the Mainstream competition

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## Introducing the competition:

*“Let me tell you a story, let me tell you in my language”*

### Pre-production

#### Generating Ideas: How to Find a Good Idea

To assist students with coming up with a “good idea” it is worthwhile getting them to think of a number of ideas before settling on the ‘one’. Ask students to think in terms of their audience, who will be watching and/or judging their films. A good idea for a film is one that will entertain an audience, they will be made to think or feel in some way, the person who makes the film can control how the audience is made to think or feel.

#### Step 1: PLAN

**Starting:** An idea for a film can come from anywhere:

- a newspaper story
- a song lyric or line from a poem
- a personal experience of someone else’s
- a character you connect with
- a person you’ve met

The list is endless, however, the most important thing to encourage, is for the student to care about their idea and want to make it into a film.

## **Brainstorm:**

Generate creative thinking by exploring topics listed below:

- a childhood memory that has changed how you are today
- an object or item that has special importance that goes missing
- a funny moment on a holiday that your family still laugh about
- a first meeting with someone and how that meeting went (new friend, new teacher, neighbor)
- first day in a new place (school, country, someone's home etc.)
- introducing a food to a new friend that they liked or didn't
- a new cultural experience (to you or someone else)

For two or three idea, ask students to explain possible thoughts or messages that could provide to an audience on the topic. This is the film's theme, the underlying message to present to audience and the judges.

## **What next?**

Once they have an idea for a film, put it into a narrative plan. The plot is organized around an inciting incident; this is a rapid change in circumstances for one or more people (characters). The plot requires one clear goal, one or two interesting obstacles for the character to overcome and a resolution that makes a comment on the film's theme "*let me tell you my story*".

## **Narrative Plan for a Short Film**

For a two to three-minute short film, students will need a structure to work with:

- one main character
- a goal
- two – three obstacles the character has to overcome
- one setting
- a resolution

Main character – the film’s protagonist and often the story is told through their point of view, the main character performs actions in order to achieve their goals.

A goal – this is something the character wants, so the plot of the film is organized around the character trying to achieve the goal.

Obstacles – problems the main character must overcome to achieve their goal. The last obstacle is the most difficult and creates the climax of the short film.

One setting – this is the time and place of the film, where the main action occurs.

A resolution – the ending of the story – does the main character get what they want or not?

## Narrative Outline

Introduce main character, setting and inciting incident

Describe how the actions character takes action to achieve his or her goal with obstacles the character has to overcome. End this section with the most difficult obstacle.

Describe the film's resolution, does the character achieve their goal? Do they get what they want or not?

By creating a narrative outline, students will be able to see whether the story can be filmed, and it will also help you assess whether there is any content that needs to be reviewed or changed. A short film starts with a problem, it has a longer middle to develop how the character overcomes the problem, and ends after the character has faced their last obstacle.



## **Step 2: Know the Equipment**

You will be able to make this film with minimal technology such as shooting handheld with a smart phone or using a camcorder and a tripod. Special effects (image manipulation) are best added during the post-production stage, not during filming.

Please check and do the following:

- Check your settings – are you shooting automatic or manual?
- The record mode should be 1920 x 1080i 25fps
- Use a tripod or an accessory for a smart phone to ensure shots are stable
- Check lighting conditions – is it too dark or too light? Will shots be under or overexposed? Change location or position if required.
- Frame your shot – check what is in the background, make sure you have what you want left in and what you don't left out.
- Composition – have all actors and props placed correctly in the frame and make sure shots are composed effectively
- Use camera movement only when necessary, panning, zooming and handheld can make your film feel unstable and uncomfortable and not allow the viewer to concentrate on the narrative
- Make sure all your shots are in focus and this is hard to correct in post-production
- Take care with sound, and don't use dialogue unless you have good microphones

## **Step 3 - Script**

### **Film Language**

To create the short film, you will need to know how to use shots correctly for the type of narrative detail they are presenting to audiences. There are up to nine shot types, and the size of the shot is dependent upon how close or far away the lens of the camera is from the subject being filmed. A short film starts with an extreme long shot or very long shot, and then cuts to long shots and medium shots and then to close-ups. Close-ups are used to reveal character emotions or focus on important details that the filmmaker wants to show the audience. Camera angles are used to create mood in the scene, or highlight emotion. Camera movement can create pace and rhythm and direct audience attention towards aspect of narrative.

There are some good websites to explain these:

<http://learnaboutfilm.com/film-language/picture/shotsize/>

<http://generator.acmi.net.au/resources/shoot>

### **Voice-over**

An effective voice-over will advance the plot, move the audience towards the climax of the film, and set the tone for the story. With a voice-over, if the viewers don't understand the mother tongue they will be relying on the English subtitles to understand the film. Keep it simple, short sentences with direct words. One shot should only contain one sentence of translation. If more than one sentence is required, then the shot needs to contain more narrative action and go for longer. There also needs to be pauses between subtitles in the shot.

## Script Format:

Once you have a narrative plan, you will need to break the story into a series of shots. For each shot, consideration needs to be given to how long it will go for, what vision will be shown and what audio will be heard. You can use a shooting script to organize the construction of the film. For a film that is two to three minutes in length will have 45 shots. A film that has 45 shots will mean that each shot is a minimum 4 seconds in length. Allow 3 words per second when creating sub-titles. If you have a 3 second shot, nine words can appear at one time but you must also allow time for the subtitle to appear and disappear. This is because you want to use a range of shot types, angles and movement to keep the plot advancing and build to the climax.

Below is a script format suitable for use:

Shot No/Length	Visual	Audio	Frame
Record the shot number and how long it will go for	Describe the shot type, angle if changing and movement if required	The scripted V/O and English subtitle required for the shot	A drawing or written description of the narrative action
Use a new row for each new shot			

## Step 4: Organise

You will need to secure locations by gaining permission to film there. Take care with locations that are too noisy e.g. beach/wind noise as this can affect the quality of the film. It would be best to avoid using any background noise altogether and remove audio from the vision during post-production. You should cast actors for the film, making sure the actors are aware of the times required for filming. If you have a voice actor, (someone who is doing the voice-over), the script must be given in advance with time for the actor to rehearse their lines.

Films are shot according to location not in order of the script. You will need to prepare a production schedule that shows who and what is required and by when. This will prevent you from having to call actors back and ensures you will get the appropriate amount of coverage to edit your film.

A production schedule looks like this:

Film Title:				Produced by:	
Date:	Scenes/Shots	Location	Characters	Costumes/props	Crew
Record dates and times	List the shots that will be filmed	List the sets and locations	Record the characters that are required	Record the costumes, props and objects needed	Record who is filming and directing.
Sun Mar 26 10am - 1pm	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11	Local Park	Boy 1 Girl 1	Exercise Gear	Sam - Filming Dave - Directing

## **Production**

### **Step 5 – Practice**

Take the equipment you are using, visit the locations and practice getting shots for your film. Test the lighting conditions, what time of the day are you filming? Is there are constraints you may have to overcome e.g. a crowded place, poor lighting, uneven pavement, distractions etc. Check how the background looks in the shot, what things will you need to consider when you do the real filming? How does camera movement look? Should use just use stable shots?

### **Step 6 – The Shoot**

Make sure you have all technical equipment, ensure that students have the script to follow as a guide. Check there is enough storage on memory card and there is a full battery.

#### **Before filming –**

- The director places and arranges actors and props
- The director tells the actors how they want them to move and look in the frame
- The camera person checks focus on camera and frames the shot
- There is continuity person to check actor's appearance and props remain the same between takes

## **Communication during filming:**

**Director:** “Quiet on set.”

**Crew:** “In position.”

**Director:** “Stand by to record.”

**Crew:** “Standing by.”

**Director:** “Roll tape.”

**Camera Operator:** Press record and indicate ‘rolling’ when the REC symbol appears in the viewfinder.

**Director:** “Mark it”

**Crew member:** Marks the shot with a clapperboard and voice: ‘Scene ..., Take ...’

**Director:** Wait one or two seconds then raise hand to count actors in silently, using fingers – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and a drop of the hand for ‘Action’.

**Actors:** Begin scene.

**Director:** Indicate ‘Cut’ with a hand movement.

**Actors:** Hold positions.

**Camera Operator:** Wait for one or two seconds before stopping the record. Check that the camera has stopped recording. Indicate camera has stopped rolling.

**Director:** Decide if the take is good enough to proceed with or if it needs to be re shot.

## **Record Voice-over**

After filming has finished, you can record a voice-over. You will need to find a quiet room, preferably carpeted, with soft furnishings and no echo. If you have access to a microphone to plug into a device such as a smart phone or computer that would be preferable. Keep the device or microphone as close to the person speaking as possible. Do a sound test before you record the entire voice-over and check levels. When recording the voice-over ask the voice actor to pause between sentences, this will help in editing later on.

## **Post-production**

Tutorials can be found online to help guide you with the functions of the editing process.

When editing know and do the following:

- Import clips into editing programme
- Label clips with shot numbers from their original script
- Shots are cut together and assembled into a timeline
- Trim the head and tail of the shot (start and end), depending on the editing programme, they are using this happens before putting in the timeline or it can be done in the timeline itself
- Sequence the shots together in order of the script from start to finish
- Put special effect transitions in to soften the cut between shots; dissolves, wipes, fades if required
- Make sure continuity is maintained, the eyeline matches and match on action cuts are used

- Look at the first and last frame of a clip to see how it matches to the next clip and so on
- Less is more, let the footage tell the story and try and avoid too many special effects

Once the footage is assembled in the timeline, add the voice-over. Remove all ambient/background sound from the timeline. You detach and delete the recorded sound from the clips. You will need to cut the voice-over just as you did with the vision clips, as there will be some clips that will have no voice-over. Put the voice-over in the audio section of the time-line and check the sound levels, it should be around – 6db. Once you have added the voice-over in, it is time to do the titles.

### **Titles and Sub-titling:**

First you need to create a title sequence. This is the title of the film; it can appear on a black screen or you can put it over the top of a clip. The title should be a hook and let your audience predict what they think the film will be about. Try not to make titles too tricky or obscure, it should help audiences engage with the story.

When subtitling, audience can read one sentence at a time. A rough rule of thumb is 3 words to one second, and the sentence should only be one to one and a half lines on the screen. If you can find title safe guides in your editing programme use this to help place the title on screen. This will prevent titles from being cut off when you export your film. Keep the font easy to read, Helvetica or Arial is a good choice. They should appear in the



lower third of the screen so the audience can see the action in the shots. Make sure the colour you choose can be seen, white can be read against darker shots and alternatively dark can be read against lighter shots. But it is important to remember to keep the colour consistent.

### **Step 10 – Deliver**

Once you are happy with your short film, you have played it back and checked titles, sound levels and vision it is time to export the project. When you export check your settings – you can select the file format in the export menu – it should be either .M4V, .MP4, .mov or .avi., generally if you select to export with match sequence settings you will be able to play your film. Once it is loaded onto the USB, check again it can be played from the USB. If it plays you are ready to submit your entry!