

FILMMAKING: A NEW WAY TO REACH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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## Filming: A New way to Reach English Language Learners

### **Introduction**

#### **Purpose**

As an elementary teacher, I wanted to complete a project that will benefit my students. I love incorporating technology into my daily teaching. I have observed, that many students who struggle to perform on traditional assignments, shine when given the ability to use technology. For this purpose, I have chosen to focus this project on English Language Learners. I want to create a way for ELL's to show their knowledge without adding the extra stress or need for language acquisition.

**The purpose of this creative project** is to develop and alternative route for English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities to demonstrate their English literacy in the classroom through filmmaking.

#### **Problem Statement**

1. Major Premise: English literacy is critical for traditional academic student performance (Porter, 2000). Low literacy English Language Learners (Alford, Hepple, Sockhil, & Tan, 2014) have difficulty successfully producing grade level literacy (reading and writing) assignments and projects.
2. Minor Premise: Although English literacy is known as a critical factor for student performance (Porter, 2000), there are few studies and resources on alternative projects for English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities that allow them to demonstrate their English literacy (reading and writing).
3. Conclusion/Major Premise: The current understanding of the relationship between English literacy and the performance of English Language Learners and students with

learning disabilities is known by educators. However, little research has been done to show alternative routes for these students to effectively show their English literacy (reading and writing) through classroom assignments.

4. Minor Premise: A broader understanding of different ways to allow English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities to demonstrate their English literacy (reading and writing) in the traditional classroom setting is needed. This could potentially result in higher performance rates among English Language Learners and students with learning disabilities.
5. Conclusion: Therefore, the purpose of this project is to explore an alternative route for fourth grade English Language Learners and fourth grade students with a learning disability to accurately and effectively demonstrate their level of English literacy (reading and writing). Specifically, the students will demonstrate their level of English literacy through the use of filmmaking.

## **Objectives**

Based on the purpose, this creative project will address the following objectives:

1. Identification of low level English literacy English Language Learners.
2. Age appropriate filmmaking strategies will be researched and taught to all students. Students will use iPads, tripods, and iMovie to create their films.
3. A traditionally written assignment will be recreated as a filmmaking assignment.
4. Analysis\Comparison of English Language Learners performance/score on the filmmaking assignment will be compared to their performance on a similar project where the end result is a written report.

English language learners will be able to effectively share their knowledge on a given subject through the use of group work and filming.

### **Description of Project**

This creative project addressed the literacy needs of English Language Learners (ELL) through filmmaking. It included fourth grade specific lessons on the art of filmmaking. It also included a final project for students to demonstrate their research on a given topic through the use of filmmaking, rather than a traditional written or oral report which limits the performance ability of ELL's. Several resources for the students including a student-oriented research website, example short films, and instruction on multimedia editing software were created and/or used as a resource for all students.

Although, this project primarily focused on the literacy needs of English Language Learners, all 65 students within two fourth grade classes at East Layton Elementary in Layton, UT participated in the project. Special attention and observations were given to the five ELL's in those two fourth grade classes.

### **Candidate's Involvement**

I created or found and obtained permission to use all the teaching and learning materials that were used during this project. I am a fourth grade teacher at East Layton Elementary. One of the classes involved with this project is my class. I prepared all the necessary materials and shared them with the teacher of the other fourth grade class. I taught the other teacher how to teach her class, and we both taught our own individual classes. As a team, we planned and carried out the parent viewing party.

### Outline of Project

A timeline for this project was created during the planning stage. This timeline was followed throughout the project to ensure that each step was completed correctly and in a timely manner. The timeline went as follows:

Date	Activity
August 2017	Create research website.
November 2017	Attend SHIFT filmmaking course.
December 2017	Share materials with co-teacher and answer any teaching questions.
January-February 2018	Begin teaching equipment guidelines and filming techniques.
February 19, 2018	Begin teaching research techniques.
February 12-23, 2018	Student research
March 6, 2018	Model using research to create a film.
March 8-15, 2018	Student filmmaking
March 16, 2018	Teach students to use editing software.
March 19-23, 2018	Students will edit their film.
March 26, 2018	Parent viewing party
March 28- April 6	Evaluation of ELL's films

April 9-26, 2018	Project write up
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**Project Materials**

The students used a Utah County website to conduct their research. I created this website using HTML 5 and CSS. Student website:

<http://itlcloud.usu.edu/~cbell/>

The students used an outline to conduct their research and begin planning their commercials. I created these worksheets using Microsoft Word. Student worksheets:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ County Research  
County \_\_\_\_\_

INTERESTING FACTS	
1.	2.
3.	4.

Places to go, see, or do	
1. Description:	2. Description:
3. Description:	4. Description:

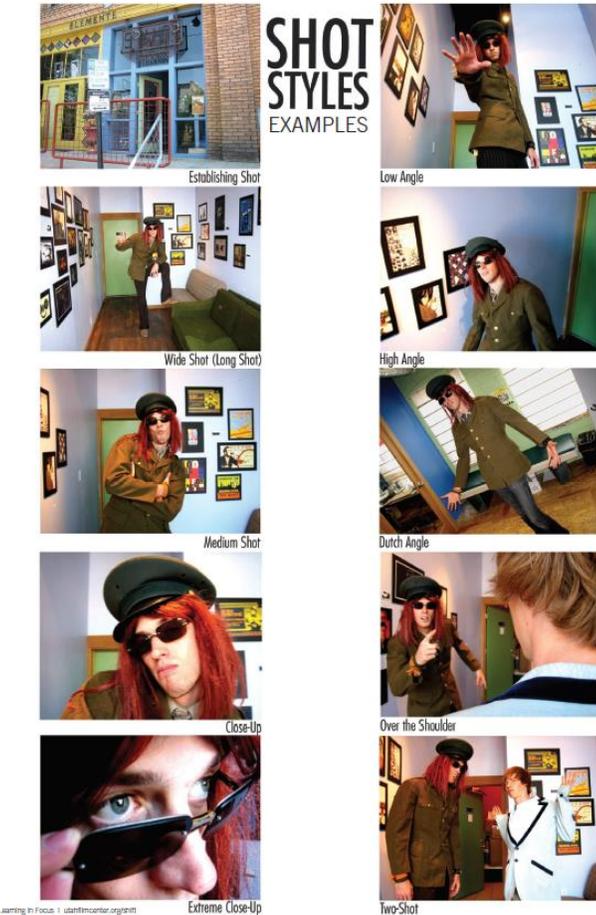
Name \_\_\_\_\_ County Research  
**Group Work**  
Slogan:

Commercial Outline

BEGINNING
MIDDLE
END

The filming examples and worksheets were provided by SHIFT. SHIFT is a company that provides film making training and materials for teachers to use in their classrooms. SHIFT worksheets:

Pre-production 1.2a



Storyboard # \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Movie Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Shot Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Shot Style: \_\_\_\_\_  
Video  Still Image   
Shot Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dialogue / Voiceover / Narration / Foot. (write at the end)

Storyboard # \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Movie Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Shot Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Shot Style: \_\_\_\_\_  
Video  Still Image   
Shot Action: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dialogue / Voiceover / Narration / Foot. (write at the end)

© 2011 Film Center

## Conclusions

### Organization of Project

This project flowed well. The specified timeline was a great outline to follow. Most aspects of the project were completed in the parameters of the timeline. Only a few adjustments

to the time line were made. The students needed additional time to film and edit their videos. Because of the need for additional time, the parent viewing party was changed to a later date.

Since this was a group project, the students were evaluated on their participation with their group and on the content of their final video. The five ELL's who participated in this project were observed as far more engaged in the work than they were with previous assignments. They thrived in the group setting where their peers could help them read and understand the materials presented to them. My original project proposal did not focus on the benefit of group work for ELLs, but I was pleased to observe that, for the five participating ELLs, working with a group was beneficial.

The purpose of this project was to decide if filming is a better route for ELLs to take when presenting their knowledge on a given subject than the traditional written report. Special attention and observations were given to the participating ELLs. The five ELLs who participated in the project have been observed in the past becoming very frustrated with their school work. However, during this project, the frustration levels of the ELLs were observed as very low. The ELLs were excited to work on their filming every day.

In order to evaluate this project, the films that the ELLs worked on with their groups were compared to a previous 'traditional' assignment where the ELLs were asked to write about an endangered animal. The overall grade of each project was compared, as well as the ELL's attitude while completing the projects.

**Comparing grades.** Assignments at East Layton Elementary are scored on a one to three rubric scale. A score of one shows that the work is below grade level and a score of three shows that the work is on or above grade level.

The scores that the ELLs received on their written report on an endangered animal ranged from a 1-2. These scores were given based on a lack of information or incomplete reports.

The scores that the ELLs received on their films on a Utah County ranged from 2.5-3. Those ELLs who received a 2.5 did so due to a lack of participation in the actual film.

**Comparing Attitudes.** Comparing the ELLs attitudes while working on the written report to their attitude while working on the filming project was the easiest aspects of the ELLs work to compare. It was evident from both teachers involved that the ELLs were more engaged and excited to work while working on the filming project than they were while working on the written report. Many of the ELLs became discouraged and gave up rather quickly while working on their written report. While working on the filming project, all of the ELLs participated daily with their groups and were observed sharing ideas equally with their peers. Two out of five of the ELLs inquired with their teacher at the beginning of each school day to find out if they would get to work on their filming project. They were finally excited to learn!

It is difficult to compare these two assignments because they are very different. However, both assignments required the students to research a given topic and report on that topic. Researching and reporting is a skill that all students need to acquire in order to be successful students. While working on the written report the students struggled and were not motivated due to their lack of English literacy. Working with a group on the filming project gave the ELLs the chance show their knowledge in an engaging way.

### **Recommendations**

After concluding this project, I highly recommend using filming as an alternative assignment for ELLs. Many ELLs are brilliant, but they haven't been given a chance to

demonstrate that brilliance due to their lack of English literacy. Through filming, the five ELLs at East Layton Elementary who participated in this project were able to demonstrate their knowledge of their assigned Utah County. They were excited to learn because they were given an opportunity to share their knowledge with their peers and teachers.

Filming is a great way for ELLs to complete higher-level assignments. I am excited to continue using filming in my classroom. Rather than waiting for the Utah County project, next year I plan to use filming as a teaching and learning strategy at the beginning of the year. I want this to be a tool my students can use throughout their time in fourth grade and throughout their education.

This was a really fun project, and all the students involved enjoyed it. I am excited to continue using filming in my classroom to help my students demonstrate their understanding of class objectives.

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