

# ELT



## Ireland bulletin

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Social Media Numbers by Joanne Mitten

Treasuring ELT Ireland by Liliana O'Reilly

Acknowledgements by Editor, Peter Lahiff

[info.eltireland@gmail.com](mailto:info.eltireland@gmail.com) @ELTIreland

[elt-ireland.com](http://elt-ireland.com)

### Making a cake

As a practical application of food and food preparation vocabulary, my class celebrated the end of a hunger-inducing unit in the coursebook by making cakes.

**Practicalities:** Like most schools, our cooking facilities are limited to a microwave, a kettle and very few utensils, but a little online research yielded some recipes for making microwave mug cakes.

**Results:** The point of this activity was for the students to use the language they had been studying in order to follow a recipe independently and produce delicious cakes by the end of the class. Working in teams, they succeeded in doing this without any assistance, and an unexpected benefit of the activity was the promotion of class bonding as we ended the class sitting around the kitchen table, eating and chatting.



Ding! Your cake is ready and no cooker needed.

Pic by Margaret Barrett

Amongst the things I have learnt from these and other classroom projects is that it is essential to give groups enough time to both plan and carry out the tasks, so that they can make work which they feel reflects their true abilities. In addition, it is important to explicitly link the project to what we have been doing in class, so that the students can see the relevance of the activity. I have also realised that creative projects are an excellent opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills in areas other than language. It was a student who discovered how to convert audio to video and post it on Facebook, another who figured out and then taught his classmates how to bind the Storybird books. These two instances also illustrate the fact that the challenges which arise in a project cannot all be anticipated; however, I believe the fluid nature of projects is one of the things which makes them enjoyable and mentally stimulating. As others have noted: "Project work is organic and unique to each class. This makes it exciting, challenging, and meaningful to adult learners." (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998)

I would encourage teachers to try out these or similar projects, for the reasons I mentioned earlier and also because project work can be as engaging and motivating for the teacher as it is for the students. I am constantly inspired by my students who bravely write, speak and create in a language not their own and whose curiosity and enthusiasm remind me what a fascinating experience learning a new language can be.

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## Film-making as student- centred learning environment

by Vanja Fazinic (Don Lovre Katic School, Croatia)

Collaborative film-making projects put students at the centre of their learning: The emphasis is on activity – based learning rather than on teaching and on teacher–student collaboration rather than instruction. This article will focus on learning language through creative process of film-making as an effective way to engage students in active learning. Setting up collaborative film-making projects fully supports the integration of school curriculum and learning outcomes into a creative new medium, allowing teenage students of any ability to find their place in film making process.

In many schools and school systems power and responsibility are held by the teacher who plays the role of the instructor and decision maker. In contrast to traditional methods, where the authority to make and carry out decisions is placed

almost entirely in the hands of the teacher, collaborative film-making projects aim to support the principles of student-centred learning: active student role, intrinsic motivation, with the accent on cooperative group work and creative expression. Such projects could be a way of moving towards a student-centred approach in the classroom.

Film-making projects encourage and enable the movement of ownership of learning from the teacher to each individual student and to the group as a whole, redefining the teacher's role as a facilitator and enabler. Students do all the work: they create their own original story, evaluate and select information sources, choose digital tools, make decisions, film scenes, edit video, add music, make voice-over narration, report results and evaluate the process and the final product.

However, the teacher does not lose control in the process of handing over that ownership, primarily because there is another kind of power in the classroom - that of creative potential. Making short films is about releasing this creative power. Each student has enormous creative potential. If we put a group of students together we multiply that potential - power to invent and create, power to solve problems, change things and the power to learn.

#### Incorporating film-making into the curriculum

When integrating collaborative film-making projects into the language classroom, the key concern among the teachers is that film-making will take too much time, especially when it must be aligned with curricular goals. However, student created videos can be used in order to assist the teaching process and they can help reaching curricular objectives.

In my teaching practices, I use film-making as a lesson extension, that is, I focus on a specific topic or a grammatical unit and use technology to support instructional events within that unit.

What does this mean? If a lesson objective is the understanding and use of tenses, making a short film can be a great creative tool for reaching this particular objective. This is how one of my first film-making projects "The story of Change" started. I asked my students to imagine that they were an item, something that is now old and forgotten, but used to be very important in a child's life. The students' task was to write their story using the following tense guide: Early life: past simple, Experiences: present perfect, What will happen next: the future with will

Students worked in small groups and each group created a story which was a basis for a short film. As a final result, the project groups created short films starring a book, a teddy and a bike. Having student-created films as an outcome helped improve the students' ability to master the tenses they were learning.

In another film-making project the focus was on word formation. I selected the vocabulary and students had to create new words on the basis of the existing ones and incorporate them into their short film. The final outcome was the film titled 'School bag love story'. The film follows two school bags falling in love, but behind a simple story there was an English lesson where students changed the words given into new adjectives, verbs and nouns by adding prefix or suffix and applied the new vocabulary in the description of the characters, the school bags, what they did and how they felt. In this way, film-making can work in any topic and almost any grade level.

#### Organizing collaborative film-making projects

Film-making projects are time-consuming endeavours, good organisation and preparation of activities at the planning stage of the project can help to overcome the time challenge.

A possible pitfall with organizing a collaborative project can be too many students trying to lead the group, or similarly one or two high achieving students do the whole job and other team members just take a backseat and do not try too hard to get the job done.

All these obstacles may be overcome by good organisation and facilitation by the teacher. It is important to make sure that the exact responsibilities and task for each group member are clear before students start making their short film. The roles that include job titles such as film director, script writer, storyboard artist, camera operator and actors are assigned to



Storyboarding is an important part of the project.

Pic by the author

each group member. Depending on the number of students involved with the project, roles may be combined and assigned to one student or two students may work as partners in one role.



Filming on location

Pic by the author

#### Students' roles

**Director:** The Director is in charge of making sure that every component of a film runs smoothly and reports to the teacher on the progress of the project. This student leads the team of students during the planning stage, story-boarding and script writing and works with the Camera Operator to complete the filming stage. The Director may also help with other roles such as acting, planning scenes, writing script, and so on.

**Script Writer:** This person writes the script (the story line, dialogue and instructions) and works with the Director and the actors to provide the exact wording to be used for the film.

**Camera operator:** The Camera Operator is responsible for creating the film footage. This student is in charge of the equipment and takes direction from the Film Director.

**Film editor:** The Film Editor views the footage with the team, decides what shots should be used, and makes the final edits using video editing software. The Film Editor adds music and creates sound effects.

**Actors / Production Designers:** Many team members can participate as actors. The job of Production Designer is shared by all the actors in the film. The Production Designer is responsible for finding and organizing the props and resources necessary to create the scene. Actors / Production Designers take directions from the Film Director.

**Producer:** With larger groups of students, the role of the Producer may be added. The Producer coordinates the project timeline and the project tasks during the entire project so that the project meets the objective. The producer works with the Director to complete the filming. This student is responsible for supervising the film production (filming scenes, sound effects, film editing).

#### The role of the teacher

The teacher's role is transformed into a role of a facilitator and mentor who understands how students learn and what motivates them and tailors their instruction accordingly.

Even though there is specific curricular content the teacher is required to teach, and even though he or she must provide classroom structure or some basic direction, the focus of the teacher is to organize and administer their classes to facilitate student autonomy, rather than teacher control. Student- centred teachers put their students first allowing them to express themselves in their own, unique way because students' freedom of expression is what motivates them and makes it easy for them to focus on learning.

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