

Expanding Intercultural Education Through the Documentary Gaze: A Powerful Tool for Technology and Learning



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Abstract

In our collaboration, we explore a dynamic pedagogical practice that combines technology and the documentary film genre. Through a Seminar Course in Spanish, we utilized technical workshops and group work to encourage students to create short documentaries, leveraging multiple languages (English, Spanish, and visual) and storytelling techniques. This hands-on approach empowers students to participate in their education actively and offers a captivating lens through which they can explore the real world.

Keywords: Documentary film, Workshop, Technology, Reality and Fiction, Languages Learning

Introduction: The Importance of Technological and Visual Literacy

Teaching today is characterized by a dynamic and demanding environment. The rapid expansion of digital media, technological advancements, and competitive educational programs aimed at improving higher education bring about promising prospects. However, they also impose significant responsibilities and pressures on both students and faculty. As educators adapt their roles to that of content facilitators, they continually integrate emerging digital tools into their teaching practices, occasionally requiring assistance in implementing new software and instructional methods. This necessitates critically evaluating the pedagogical limits and affordances of technology. Concurrently, there is a need to cultivate a pedagogical approach that fosters novel opportunities for engaging communities and conveying knowledge narratives that inspire and empower students and educators while contributing to cultural knowledge.

This article introduces the documentary film genre as a rich educational resource that not only enables teachers to explore technology in collaboration with their students but also empowers the students themselves to share stories that enrich cultural knowledge. In exploring this genre, students develop inclusive communication practices, hone their critical thinking skills, gain facility in a variety of digital technologies, and discover the importance of stories and storytelling. Audiovisual language serves as the lingua franca for our current generation of young learners, with documentary language serving as a tool of empowerment and a means to share their stories. By teaching a Spanish course centered around documentary film, we were able to embrace multicultural narratives, practice the target language, gain a deeper comprehension of contemporary visual language, and engage students as digital creators.

The documentary genre has become increasingly widespread thanks to digital technologies. With this in mind, we embarked on an innovative endeavor to integrate this genre

into a Spanish seminar course, aiming to introduce students not only to the expressive possibilities and cultural insights offered by documentary media but also to the intricacies of digital tools employed in its production and dissemination. Initially, our course was based on a textbook titled *Documentary Cinema* (Hertel & Harrington, 2017), which offers a well-curated selection of documentaries that explore Latin American culture and provide valuable opportunities for practical reflection. In addition to this resource, we expanded our repertoire to include a diverse range of more recent materials sourced from websites showcasing the work of activist filmmakers. This expansion prompted us to empower students much in the same way that these filmmakers are empowered—through meaningful connections to their communities that are given expression through the creative power of digital tools.

Various factors contributed to our ability to rethink the course in this way, chief among them being the massification and affordability of technology. Even without the benefit of extensive media training, our students are already generating visual content rooted in their experiences—from Instagram posts to Tik Tok videos to digital stories edited using smartphone apps. As such, many of them intuitively understand how the boundaries between fiction and reality blur in the realm of social media (Campo, 2020). In our course, we ask that students exhibit fidelity to reality, trading in fancy filters and other mainstays of social media storytelling for a commitment to honesty and integrity in their interactions with their audience. We provide comprehensive instruction on effective strategies for sourcing, analyzing, verifying, and transforming materials into compelling documentaries, all the while asking students to consider how their own creative decisions—camera angles, background music, interviewing techniques, etc.—influence audience perception of their subject matter.

In implementing this approach, we achieved five key outcomes:

1. **Enhancement of communication and linguistic skills:** Students primarily spoke Spanish during class activities, but they also conducted interviews in English, which they subsequently translated and prepped for bilingual presentation, subtitling their documentaries in Spanish as appropriate.
2. **Integration of technology into content creation:** Students delved into the realm of technological tools, exploring the diverse expressive possibilities they offer.
3. **Flexibility in course implementation:** This documentary course was designed to accommodate various modes of delivery, including hybrid formats, traditional classroom settings, and even online courses.
4. **Critical examination of the documentary genre:** Students engaged in a thoughtful exploration of the genre, emphasizing the importance of reliable information and of fostering a discerning approach.
5. **Participation in an inclusive community project:** Students had the invaluable opportunity to interact with individuals from different countries and engage with native Spanish speakers, contributing to an inclusive and collaborative learning endeavor.

Developing the Course:

As mentioned above, we made a deliberate decision to deviate from our initial version of the course, which was erected and timed around a succession of textbook chapters. While our chosen textbook, *Documentary Cinema*, offered valuable educational audiovisual resources and facilitated access to the target culture, we aimed to empower students to actively manipulate language and film materials. We believed that their learning experience would be more effective if they were not confined to the passive consumption of videos provided by their instructors.

The documentary genre, with its ability to convey complex and contemporary events, employ essayistic narration, and emphasize the importance of verifying data and incorporating diverse perspectives, presented a unique opportunity for students to delve deeper into modes of representation. It allowed them to transcend the role of mere spectators and become creators of visual artifacts that tell life stories or shed light on societal issues. Our exploration of this genre prompted us to recognize the need for teaching practices to incorporate more media and visual communication. We realized the importance of embracing audiovisual language in the classroom, adapting our approach to align with the "pictorial turn" that W.J.T. Mitchell (1995) has identified—the shift from the dominance of the written word to a cultural shift that values the image and its power to convey messages. In today's visually saturated world, it is crucial for students to develop literacy in producing audiovisual materials.

Initially, our perception of the documentary genre was that it would serve as a valuable stimulus for discussions in advanced Spanish and as a tool for critical cultural analysis of reality. However, we were fortunate to have a second instructor who specialized in media technology join our class, complementing the course with workshops. The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a massive shift to online classes, created a heightened demand for multimedia materials. Teachers turned to technology and creatively utilized it to engage students who were grappling with the shock of the situation. In our case, in 2020, due to the COVID-19 circumstances, we had to teach the final portion of our course on Latin American documentaries online. This presented an opportunity for practical activities that explored various forms of communication, genre creation, and the fundamental principles of visual language. As a result, students engaged with three languages throughout the course: Spanish, visual, and technical. This holistic approach integrated their ideas through different forms of expression.

Our focus on the components of film enabled students to analyze the thematic content of the documentaries they watched while also examining the techniques employed and recognizing the technical aspects and aesthetic features of the films. This approach allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of how images convey ideas.

Furthermore, the most effective way to comprehend this genre, with its emphasis on evidence and reality, was to provide students with the opportunity to create their own documentaries. This involved working in creative groups and assuming distinct roles in the production process. As a result, the course encompassed two main modalities:

1. Reflection and analysis of themes and techniques used in various types of documentaries.
2. Practical workshops that provided an explanation and hands-on experience with the different technologies that enable audiovisual storytelling.

In the following sections, we will present the outcomes of the Spanish course "El documental latinoamericano" ("The Latin American Documentary"), which has proven to be successful in both online/hybrid and traditional approaches. In the first part, "Reality and fiction," we explore the significant role of documentaries as educational and cultural materials, addressing real-world issues and seeking evidence related to current and historical matters. Topics covered include how reality has shaped our perception, the increase in students adopting a critical lens, and the importance of narratives and inclusivity within our communities. In the second part, "Practical Workshops," we will delve into the workshop approach, where students engage with technical and audiovisual language to shape their ideas and projects. Finally, in the last section, "Takeaways," we will provide insights into the student experience and course deliverables.

Reality and Fiction

In an era characterized by an overwhelming amount of information and misinformation, the dissemination of both valuable and deceptive narratives has become alarmingly easy, exerting influence on public opinion. Social networks have only amplified pre-existing methodologies used for this purpose. In response to these challenges, the educational system must actively foster the analysis of facts in contrast to emotionally charged and fictitious narratives. It is crucial to cultivate intellectual freedom and equip higher education students with critical tools to navigate the vast sea of information. Simultaneously, educators themselves seek robust defenses against those who seek to impose their agendas through coercion and deceit. Education represents a resolute quest for truth, as it is this truth that liberates us from falsehoods. Within the realm of documentaries, facts and truth form the core content, even when creative elements are employed to convey reality. Consequently, the ability to discern what is real becomes a skill that can be honed and applied through the practice of documentary filmmaking.

The audiovisual language of documentaries provides a valuable platform for students to engage in authentic conversations and explore various linguistic elements. Through the process of creating their own documentaries, students not only gain practical experience but also develop a heightened sense of critical reflection. This transformation became evident when we analyzed the documentary *Which way home* (Cammisa, 2010), which depicts the journey of immigrant children seeking to reach the United States. At this point, our students had already begun their own filming endeavors, and their active participation led to insightful discussions. They raised thought-provoking questions based on their own experiences, such as: Why did the director prioritize filming over assisting the children? How do humor and tragedy intersect in this documentary? What purpose does the foreground serve? What techniques were employed to

encourage the children to share their stories off-camera? How did the director establish trust with the children? These interventions showcased the tangible benefits of the practical exercises. Students demonstrated their ability to discern the boundaries between fiction and reality, while critically analyzing the form and content of the film from both the perspective of spectators and creators.

Practical Workshops: Learning Through Action

Creating audiovisual work is a collaborative endeavor that encompasses multiple stages. In this Spanish course for English speakers, students must navigate various languages. Alongside the target language, Spanish, they must grasp the technical aspects of documentary filmmaking, understanding its visual vocabulary and the diverse functions and production stages involved. Documentaries are remarkably rich in testimonies, images, and archival material. To actively engage students and merge these languages effectively, we incorporated a series of workshops where they could explore visual techniques and reflect on the communicative impact they generate.

Our approach involved forming student groups that functioned as a community of learners. José Bowen's book *Teaching Naked* (2012) highlights the benefits of cooperative activities in higher education. He argues that direct instruction often hampers spontaneous exploration, as the teacher is readily available to provide answers and solve problems. Following Prince's perspective, he notes that incorporating active, cooperative, or problem-based learning during class time enhances retention, application skills, and deeper understanding across various disciplines.

Workshop 1: Documentary Photography (La fotografía documental)

Preparation for Picture Analysis:

To introduce the topic of documentary photography, we presented several photographs encompassing artistic, decorative, and documentary styles. We tasked students with categorizing these images, enabling them to identify the documentary genre among the diverse visuals. They swiftly selected documentary photos and explained their contents. Two notable photographers that emerged in their discussions were Delilah Montoya, a Hispanic photographer, and Sebastião Salgado, a Brazilian social documentary photographer and photojournalist. Ferrer (2021) explains that Montoya's photographs often depict families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, Latinx families, and others with ancestral ties to the New World. These families served as excellent examples to demonstrate to students that capturing documentary photography does not necessitate technical perfection or traveling to distant lands but rather the ability to tell a compelling story.

On the other hand, Sebastião Salgado, through his art, elicits immediate emotional responses. As Nair suggests,

Sebastião Salgado's photography invariably evokes a response. Some leave their exhibitions with tears in their eyes and feel ennobled, but at the same time, humiliated by the images they have seen, as if the pathos and splendor of these visions of human struggle and, above all, humanity's survival, had touched their foreheads with an extraordinary touch of light.
(2012, p. 1)

Photography Workshop:

During the photography workshop, participants delve into various topics and activities, including reviewing photographs to emphasize the importance of understanding how photography and videography extend beyond the frame. Together, we:

- Discuss the elements that convey meaning in photography and videography, such as angles, framing, light, focus, and composition. Students are given this guide as a reference point for the discussion: <https://create.piktochart.com/output/15782239-how-photographs-convey-meaning>
- Explain how these elements can reflect our biases and influence the conveyed meaning.
- Provide examples of how framing can skew a situation or alter perception.
- Discuss the significance of revealing what lies beyond the frame, particularly in documentaries.
- Explore the diverse effects of lighting and its applications in different settings.
- Explain the various principles of image composition in photography and videography, including the rule of thirds.

Ultimately, this workshop aims to equip students with a heightened understanding and appreciation for the elements that constitute visual language. It becomes apparent to them that, much like the diverse impact of various parts of speech, the choices we make regarding image framing and composition hold significant influence. By recognizing the power behind these decisions, participants embark on a journey of discovery, where they unravel the intricacies of visual storytelling and the art of conveying meaning through imagery.

After the workshop:

Each element used in the workshops was examined and identified in the films shown in class. For example, when the photography workshop was given, we saw the types of shots, colors, textures, and distances in the frames of the film *Home* (Arthus-Bertrand, 2009) Regarding content, documentary photography is a genre of photography that aims to tell a story or convey a

message about a particular subject or issue. We notice in the final shot examples how the students put their knowledge to work with the visual language, they use composition, light, and color to convey emotions, atmosphere, and mood. They effectively use the visual language of photography to tell the story.

We asked them to create examples for the next class with the material learned in the workshop, following the instructions below:

1. Find a place where you think an event or news is happening.
2. Use the technical aspect you are learning to compose the image: deciding what elements to include in the photo and how to frame them. Make sure to focus on the critical elements of the story and frame them in a way that conveys the information clearly.
3. Attention to lighting: Light is essential for good photography. Consider the available light and how it may affect the image.
4. Be respectful: If you are covering an event or news involving people, ensure that you are respectful and get the necessary permission to photograph people in the image.
5. Edit the image: Make sure to edit the image appropriately to highlight the key elements of the story. The editing should be ethical and not misleadingly alter the image's information.

Most students follow these steps, go to their own neighborhoods or downtown, and effectively capture a photograph to explain to the group how it portrays an actual event or news. They demonstrated that understanding the elements of photography and videography conveys meaning effectively.

Workshop 2: Interview Strategies

Engaging in interviews with native speakers is a highly effective approach to practicing a foreign language. However, students frequently encounter difficulties when it comes to formulating questions in the language they are learning. To enhance students' language skills and foster their confidence as interviewers, we have compiled a set of valuable practices aimed at creating a comfortable and supportive environment for students to practice interviewing skills.

Firstly, we focused on educating students about communicative practices, emphasizing empathy and attentive listening to their interviewees. To generate interview questions and answers, we discussed topics from the course material and documentaries viewed in class, such as typical foods or fast foods, climate change, and immigration. By actively engaging in question-asking activities with their peers and immersing themselves in role-playing scenarios, students were able to cultivate their communicative skills and foster a deeper understanding of the interview process.

Next, we explored various examples of interviews in different documentaries viewed during class sessions. This exercise enabled students to recognize the diverse approaches employed in interviews. Some interviews were presented as casual conversations, while others featured off-camera questions, survey formats, discussions on specific topics, and a few aimed to capture the essence of the speakers, as one student eloquently expressed.

In addition to identifying suitable topics for engaging native speakers who possess opinions or compelling stories, students were encouraged to develop strategies for accessing potential interviewees. For instance, they learned to explain their language learning journey or display genuine interest in the interviewee's expertise. In online classes, students also utilized language exchange websites or apps to connect with native speakers.

Another important aspect was preparing questions, which involved collaborative group work. Each student proposed the types of questions they wished to ask their interviewee. Subsequently, they compiled a relevant list of questions aligned with the chosen topic of conversation.

By following these guidelines, students can maximize the benefits of interviews in documentaries, ultimately improving their language proficiency in an engaging and practical manner.

Interview Techniques' Workshop:

During the interview techniques workshop, we focus on imparting essential skills to students, enabling them to approach interviews with calmness and courtesy that instill a sense of ease in the interviewee. Through engaging role-play activities, students practice asking questions to both their peers and instructors.

A primary objective of this workshop is to teach students the art of asking open-ended questions that elicit detailed and meaningful responses from interviewees. We emphasize the significance of employing descriptive language to create vivid portraits of the individuals being interviewed, fostering an environment where they feel valued and included.

In addition, the workshop encompasses essential techniques for conducting interviews, including vox populi. This approach entails engaging in street interviews with random individuals to collect a wide range of perspectives and information, offering a glimpse into public opinion. It is important to note that vox populi is not advocated as a replacement for more rigorous, statistically significant research methods. Instead, it is presented as an introductory tool to facilitate discussions where diverse viewpoints can steer interviewers towards alternative

investigative avenues, enabling a holistic understanding of complex issues from various perspectives.

Following the workshop, students shared their experiences of managing nerves and feeling empowered during the interview process, particularly as they had the opportunity to utilize as much Spanish as possible. We encouraged them not to worry excessively about making mistakes during conversations with interviewees, but rather to focus on the act of communication itself. The objective was to establish a connection, understand the interviewee, and encourage them to express their thoughts. Personally, the students viewed the experience as a fantastic opportunity to practice and improve their language skills, further enhancing their overall interview capabilities.

Workshop 3: Narratives

Narrative preparation:

Using a foreign language to craft a narrative or plot is an excellent way of practicing the target language. It is an engaging way to write in Spanish and helps to improve vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. The workshop on narrative gave the students a sense of how to effectively structure their stories, enhancing their storytelling abilities and fostering a deeper connection with the target language.

The first step to prepare the students for the narrative workshop was a group exercise to recreate and reconstruct the plot of the last documentary viewed in class: *La mina del diablo (The Devil's Miner)* (Davidson & Ladkani, 2005). They needed to make a plot from a new perspective, so we picked the protagonist's little sister, Vanesa. We provided many photographs from the movie so students could organize a narrative to tell the girl's view of life in the

mine. The students used the visual material well, and every group came out with a different impression of Vanessa's life and interpretations of her thoughts.

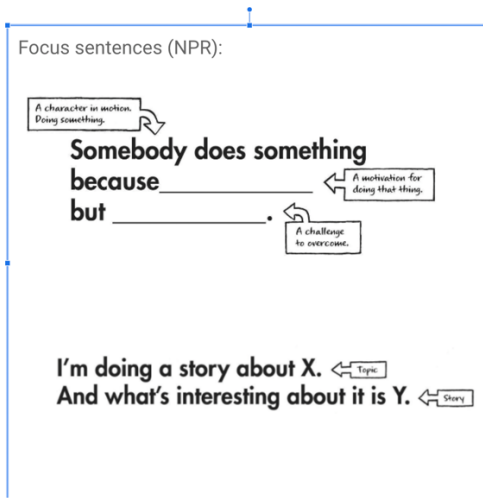
Narrative Workshop:

We begin this workshop with an analysis of existing narratives, encouraging students to explore films, documentaries, and written works to identify diverse narrative structures. This exercise deepens students' understanding of how different narrative structures effectively convey various types of stories. For efficiency's sake, we narrow our focus to discussing and applying the three storytelling structures outlined below. We do this not to constrain students' creativity or limit their options, but to get them thinking and talking about different approaches to telling stories in compelling ways.

The Three-Act Structure: This traditional framework divides a story into three distinct acts—Setup or Exposition, Confrontation or Rising Action, and Resolution or Denouement. Each act serves a specific purpose, contributing to the overall narrative arc.

The "e" Structure: A favorite among podcasters, the "e" structure starts in the present, delves into the past for explanations, returns to the starting point, and then moves forward to explore imagined futures or the questions that arise from them.

Focus Sentences: While not necessarily narrative structures, focus sentences serve as thought-provoking tools. They capture an entire story within a single sentence. Students can use sentence stems as prompts and expand upon them to structure their stories. Take, for example, these focus sentence examples featured in *Out on the Wire* (Abel, 2015):



Abel, Jessica, and Broadway Books. *Out on the Wire: The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio*. First ed., B/D/W/Y/Broadway Books, 2015.

After gaining a solid grasp of these basic, time-tested storytelling structures, students can practice organizing and presenting their ideas in captivating ways. An essential component of the workshop offers students a valuable opportunity to put these structures into practice through collaborative storytelling activities. Working in groups, students collectively create narratives that incorporate diverse storytelling strategies. This activity not only sharpens their collaboration and brainstorming skills but also allows them to experiment with different narrative structures within a collaborative setting.

In addition, the workshop includes sound design exercises. Students focus on the intricacies of sound design, utilizing appropriately licensed sound effects and music to complement their narratives. Through this exercise, they gain an understanding of how sound can be harnessed to enhance storytelling and seamlessly integrate it into diverse narrative structures.

After workshop:

When crafting a narrative or plot together, students challenge themselves to use more complex structures and vocabulary than they might typically use in everyday conversation.

Group narratives can help students communicate among themselves and improve their writing skills and the ability to express themselves in the target language.

Activities in the regular class:

Drafting a story or narrative can be a fun and engaging way to practice the language, allowing the group to be creative and use their imagination. Creating the plot can help make the learning process more enjoyable and memorable. Overall, using a foreign language to craft a narrative or plot can be an effective way to practice the language, as it allows the use of the language in a meaningful and engaging way.

Workshop 4: Editing

Teaching video editing is challenging due to the vast array of different software options, variations in interfaces, and the constraint of limited class time. To navigate these challenges effectively, it is crucial to approach the subject with thoughtful consideration. Here are some key questions helpful in achieving that thoughtfulness:

1. How much time is allocated for your workshop?
2. Which three video editing skills are the most relevant or essential to the assignment at hand?
3. How can you incorporate an activity that allows students to gain hands-on experience with the software they will be using?
4. Is the software you plan to use widely available to all students, either through lab setups or library checkout services?

In applying these questions to our course, we concluded that dedicating 75 minutes of class time to introducing iMovie would be suitable. iMovie is a widely used video editing software included with Apple iOS and macOS devices. Despite this software being Mac-specific,

we were confident that students would have access to it through campus Mac labs or library checkout services. Moreover, iMovie strikes a balance by offering powerful features that meet the expectations of experienced editors, while also maintaining a user-friendly interface suitable for beginners learning in a single class session.

Our class session focuses on three fundamental editing skills: clip selection and organization, applying transitions and effects, and incorporating sound when appropriate. These skills lay a solid foundation for students to create compelling videos with iMovie.

First, in the clip selection and organization section, we provide students with a collection of video clips that can be seamlessly edited together to craft a concise one-minute story. To guide them through this process, we first assist students in labeling the clips and then demonstrate how to edit them cohesively using iMovie. Throughout this hands-on activity, we actively highlight common video editing pitfalls to avoid, including jump cuts, inconsistent audio quality, continuity problems, insufficient color correction, and pacing issues that can hinder the flow and cohesiveness of the video.

Next, in the section devoted to transitions and effects, we show students how to add transitions between video clips, cautioning them against some of the transitions that are so involved as to be bewildering. We also work on text effects like overlays for interviewee identification.

Finally, in the section on sound, we show students how to edit audio levels for consistency, have them incorporate appropriately licensed sound effects and music into their workshop projects, and introduce them to websites featuring Creative Commons licensed music and sound effects.

By engaging with these essential skills and completing practical exercises, students gain a solid understanding of video editing principles and how to avoid common mistakes. As such, they are sufficiently equipped to create the final deliverable for our class: a short documentary that presents well.

Takeaways

Online classes can broaden the field of study while including community.

Moving the course online was fine. We accommodated content easily: Online, we discussed and analyzed films, students worked in groups using Zoom and shared ideas, and we even had the latest workshop on "Editing" online. The final videos were genuine and told the story of the pandemic. The result was mixed, but we found two beautiful examples: one was the documentary *Los voluntarios de la Pandemia (Volunteers During the Pandemic)*, which tells the story of a Harvest Bible Chapel, a Community Pantry in Illinois that had to increase its work, given the great demand for people who were unable to work due to the pandemic. The other successful example of transmitting reality in a documentary was *Los esenciales (The Essential Ones)*. It describes the lives of essential workers during the pandemic and their sacrifice, exposing themselves to contagion, working overtime, and separating from their families for fear of contagion. The student who supervised that film works in a pharmacy. The film was very moving because that story of bravery was his story. That ability cannot be covered with lectures; it is necessary to allow students to experience diverse ways of relating to reality. The documentary is an excellent audiovisual genre to explore the social fabric and understand different perspectives. How do we combat the condition of indiscernibility between the territories of fiction and reality through the contemporary moment? The student can draw the line between fact and fiction through critical analysis generating the audiovisual creation of it; the

strategies to discern forms of manipulation of the real cannot be acquired through lectures. Our goal was to help students understand that documentaries are storytelling that explores real stories and issues using film or video. We oriented them to know the difference between fact, fiction, and opinion while simultaneously creating documentaries.

Reflections and ideas from students

A useful way to experiment with real conversations is through the audiovisual language of documentaries. By creating a documentary, students gain experience and learn about the languages involved in the process. Also, we noticed that they reflected more critically; after their first incursions with the camera, it was a change. For example, when we were discussing the documentary *Which way home*, a film that portrays the journey of immigrant children seeking to reach the United States, the students, who had already started shooting, pointed out the difficulties faced by the director of that film and raised discussions based on their experiences, such as: Why was the director able to continue filming without helping the children? Why are there humorous scenes on such a tragic topic? What is the reason for using that foreground? What questions do they ask off-camera to make children talk? How do they earn the children's trust? What would you do in his place? In their interventions, we could see the benefits of the practices. They discerned the limits between fiction and reality, and reflected on the form and content of the film as spectators and from the creator's perspective.

Inclusivity

In Spring 2022, we had the opportunity to teach *El documental latinoamericano* again. The mode was utterly face-to-face. Most of the participants live on campus. We suggested the topic of inclusion and social justice in Indiana. The idea was to learn more about the Hispanic community organizations in this state. Although we gave them a list of available organizations

they could visit, most students preferred to do their work at the university, many arguing that it was a hot topic and necessary to discuss the institution's efforts to increase diversity. Also, many lived on campus, and the second part of the semester was too busy to travel around the city.

We provide the following instructions to direct the work:

1. Find compelling stories and people. You should look for individuals or groups with persuasive stories and experiences about inclusivity and social justice. Student addressed three topics: Immigrant Workers, International Students, and Lack of Diversity. These personal stories will bring the message to life and create an emotional connection with the audience.
2. Use diverse voices and perspectives. It is important to include diverse voices and perspectives in your documentary to provide a well-rounded view of the subject. Ideal for these topics, they need to have individuals from divergent backgrounds, cultures, races, genders, and socioeconomic statuses.
3. Use effective storytelling techniques learned in the workshops.

The result was four interesting documentaries: *Diversidad en Butler*; *A través de las ventanas de Jordan Hall*; *El sueño de Butler*; and *Vida extranjera en Butler* (*Diversity at Butler*; *Through the Windows of Jordan Hall*; *Butler's Dream*; and *Foreign Life in Butler*). The first documentary shows the perspective of students who notice the lack of diversity at the university and interview professors who talk about the efforts that the administration and faculty make to increase diversity on campus. The students address the varsity team, showing that the lack of diversity is problematic; everyone works to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment. The story shows a lack of diversity that produces shame. *El sueño de Butler* tells stories of immigrant workers at Butler. The directors convey empathy and emotion using the student's perspective, the

history of the workers when they arrived in the United States, and what factors prompted them to migrate. The atmosphere the film creates is friendly and intimate. Finally, *Vida extranjera en Butler* comments on the reception of foreign students at the university and what they think of the country that welcomes them.

All students indicated how their documentary work had mobilized them to act on the issue of diversity at the university.

Conclusions: Class material & advice

Today the production of documentaries is growing vibrantly and dynamically. Documentaries have risen since the Lumière brothers' first film, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon* (1895). That historical event began in the cinema, indicating the need to deal with reality. On the current rise of the genre, Paul Ward (2005) announces: "One thing is certain: because documentaries tell stories about the real world, they will always be part of that world and must continue to evolve with it." (p. 101). Understanding, analyzing, and exercising this genre is a stimulus for the critical and communicative skills that higher education can provide to students.

Advice going forward:

- It is necessary to incorporate in our class material examples of documentaries made by students. Young documentary makers' ideas and themes increase students' participation in the discussions. Some good examples are the work at <https://www.youthdocumentary.org>, and, in Spanish, we also find <https://webdoc.proyecteheber.com/es/>. These sites show films that address critical issues for young people and show the importance of visual language as a tool for critical knowledge. Some universities in Spain have developed a Webdoc in

which young people tell their life stories. The Webdoc is proposed as an audiovisual method of youth empowerment and a research tool for new dynamic proposals for participation and training pathways for young people.

- In class, do not forget to use examples from your students.
- Go outside the campus with the students. Take pictures with them. Take them to look for nearby topics in their community, the problems in their neighborhood or city, university life, etc.
- Promote inclusivity through interviews. This can be achieved by using inclusive language, avoiding unconscious bias, asking diverse interview questions, creating an inclusive interview environment, and including diverse interviewers. Ensure that the interview process is fair and equitable for all candidates and students.
- Use a screening function as the final project and invite community members, family, interviewers, and helpers.
- Practice interculturality and a second language: Use Zoom or other online tools to find people worldwide who want to talk. Students could benefit from using online tools like this to create a global approach and establish connections between unlikely interlocutors. It's all about expanding your horizons and learning from different perspectives! And they can practice languages. As Bowen emphasizes, "Learning now happens in more mobile, customized, and varied ways. We must consider how we can advance student learning by thinking equally about learning environments inside and outside the classroom." (p. xiii)

In addition to the points mentioned above, we would like to underline the importance of dedicating more time to filming and editing our students' ideas in the context of creating

documentary films. By actively allowing young people to participate in filmmaking, we can harness the power of their unique perspectives and insights. Engaging students in filming not only serves as a pedagogical methodology for practicing languages and communication but it also highlights the significance of learning from emotional experiences in life.

Through the medium of documentary filmmaking, students have the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and those of others. This process enables them to develop critical thinking skills necessary for discerning what is real and what is not. By actively engaging with the subject matter and shaping their narratives, students can gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. This type of learning, rooted in authentic emotional experiences, has the potential to create a more accurate and genuine representation of reality.

Therefore, by spending more time filming and editing our students' ideas, we enhance their creative abilities and foster a deeper connection with the subject matter. This hands-on approach empowers them to become active participants in their education and encourages them to explore the world through the lens of storytelling.

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