Drama, Film & Theatre Studies in the Classroom Training Session Notes

Date: 9-10-24
Time: 19:00-20:00

Session Overview: The session explored the process of guiding students from learning film language to producing a final film project. It involved practical approaches to scriptwriting, storyboarding, camera work, sound design, and editing using a variety of software tools.

1. Script Development & Storyboarding:

Students were introduced to film language and tasked with writing detailed scripts using Celtx (free web version) or Figure on Mac. Emphasis was placed on scene descriptions, character development, and dialogue writing. They also focused on shot types, including wide shots, close-ups, and various camera movements. Storyboards served as an essential tool, helping students map out the visual structure of their films. Arrows and notes were used to mark camera movements and angles, reinforcing their understanding of framing and shot variety.

2. Camera Techniques & Photography:

Students experimented with camera techniques, focusing on settings such as ISO, aperture, depth of field, and lighting to develop their visual storytelling. Exercises helped them to apply these technical settings to different filming styles, from static shots to handheld camera work. The importance of camera angles, movement, and composition was underscored through practical exercises aimed at mimicking various directorial styles.

3. Director's Notebook & Experimentation:

Students were encouraged to keep a Director's Notebook, experimenting with shot composition, lighting, and color in preparation for their final projects. They explored influences from well-known visual artists (e.g., Edward Hopper) and filmmakers, focusing on how lighting and color shape atmosphere and mood. The notebook allowed students to try different techniques before committing them to their final films, including detailed tests with camera framing and editing tools.

4. Sound Design & Foley Work:

Sound design was a key element, with students becoming their own Foley artists by creating original sounds using everyday objects (e.g., switches, pans). Software such as Premiere Pro and Audacity (free) was recommended for sound editing and design. Although Audacity has limitations in syncing sound precisely with visuals, it offers a strong foundation for creating atmospheric soundtracks. The role of sound was discussed not only in terms of clarity but also as an expressive tool to enhance the film's emotional depth.

5. Pre-Production Planning:

Students prepared detailed shot lists, mapped out their filming schedules, and planned their soundtracks well in advance.

Exercises in pre-production helped them think critically about camera angles, movement, and sound. By planning out their projects in this structured way, students built the confidence

to tackle more advanced filmmaking concepts. Visual styles, like using handheld cameras or specific lighting setups, were practiced to ensure their understanding before production began.

6. Software & Editing Tools:

For editing, students were encouraged to use Adobe Premiere Pro, After Effects, and Audacity for sound manipulation. Other recommended tools included Filmic Pro (an iPhone app), which allows smartphones to mimic professional DSLR cameras, offering manual control over settings like ISO and aperture.

For younger children or schools with limited budgets, iMovie (available on iPads) and Filmic Pro were highlighted as accessible alternatives for video editing and filmmaking.

Stop-motion animation was recommended for younger students, as it helps them grasp fundamental film concepts while working with a simpler, hands-on approach.

7. Animation & Young Learners:

Stop-motion animation and its appeal to younger students were discussed, focusing on how preschool to primary-age children can engage with film language through simple yet creative projects.

Applications like iMovie were noted as user-friendly for introducing children to editing, with stop-motion animation projects allowing students to grasp storytelling fundamentals.

8. Resources for Teaching Film:

The Into Film website was introduced as a resource for free teaching materials, including worksheets, film language guides, and access to short film clips. Short film clips were emphasized as being more appropriate for classroom learning than full-length feature films due to time constraints in the school day. Short clips also match students' attention spans, which have been influenced by platforms like TikTok and Instagram. The website provides a password-protected area with copyright-cleared clips, enabling educators to use film sequences legally in their teaching.