

Using Nonprofit Commercials to Teach English

Audiovisual texts are a valuable resource in language teaching for several reasons. One is that they promote multisensory learning in the classroom. According to recent studies, multisensory instruction makes learning more effective and sustainable—provided that the material is didactically sound, tailored to the teaching situation, and of limited duration (Weiss 2016).

What is more, communication in the twenty-first century has changed due to the widespread use of the Internet and mobile devices, social media networks, and video-sharing platforms. All these forms of communication use audiovisual texts that are multimodal—they consist of two or more modes, such as sound, written text, and moving and still pictures. It is important to reflect this reality in the classroom, as “in the English language curricula of a number of countries—for example, Singapore, Canada and Australia—two new skills, ‘viewing’ and ‘visually representing,’ have been added to the traditional skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking” (Donaghy 2019). This also applies to Europe, where the Council of Europe has added the following audiovisual comprehension items to its assessment scale:

- following changes of topic and identifying main points;
- identifying details, nuances, and implied meaning;
- delivery: from slow, clear standard usage to the ability to handle slang and idiomatic usage (2020, 52).

Films or videos are common forms of audiovisual text. Their study promotes the use of critical-thinking skills, such as analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, because “the act of engaging with a film ... requires students to truly consider what they are watching beyond merely recounting the narrative” (Baratta 2019, 11). Rössler (2020, 4) argues for the specific use of aesthetic audiovisual texts, for instance short films, feature films, movie trailers, music videos, corporate videos, and nonprofit commercials, to train receptive skills; the interplay of image and sound in these audiovisual texts is more complex than in purely informative texts. Due to their higher complexity, aesthetic audiovisual texts are particularly suited for training critical-thinking skills.

Nonprofit commercials and public service announcements (PSAs) are an interesting film category that can be considered aesthetic audiovisual texts. They are designed by governmental agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs—nonprofit organizations that function independently of the government), voluntary organizations, and civic groups. Their aim is to raise awareness of a social issue and inform, educate, and

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persuade viewers to take action, encourage a change in behavior, offer assistance, or appeal for donations. They address issues that include poverty, the plight of refugees, bullying, domestic violence, health, and safe driving. A well-made nonprofit commercial entertains, educates, and stimulates its audience.

These films are an inspiring resource in the English classroom because various narrative devices and cinematic techniques are used to achieve the organizations' goals and because they provide ample opportunities for language practice and development of critical thinking. This article discusses techniques that nonprofit commercials employ, shows ways of exploiting them for teaching English, and provides a list of films in the Appendix that may be of interest to English language teachers.

ADVANTAGES OF USING NONPROFIT COMMERCIALS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Nonprofit commercials (in this article also referred to as “films”) are a valuable resource for language teachers for the following reasons:

- The aim of the commercials is to reach as many people as possible to spread an organization's message and promote its cause. Therefore, they are freely available on the Internet and can be watched and shared from any place with an Internet connection or with a mobile device.
- The films are short—usually less than three minutes long—but most are professionally made and frequently tell a

complete story. They can be integrated into a lesson of topic-based language learning (where the contents of the lesson are arranged around a topic); they can also be a subject for language practice or a resource in project-based learning.

- Different types of learners can benefit from the films because they communicate through multiple channels—images, sound, speech, and text.
- Films with minimal speech (or no speech at all) can be selected for low-level students, and activities can be adapted accordingly.
- The films can be used in communicative language activities to develop an array of skills, including listening and reading comprehension, writing (analysis and reviews), speaking (discussion and presentation), information analysis, and research.
- The films can serve as a springboard to discuss important global issues that are often interlinked, for instance social, ecological, and socio-economic concerns (Grimm, Meyer, and Volkmann 2015, 163–164).
- Film and critical-media literacy are developed when students analyze the films and study the websites of the organizations that released them.

To make full, productive use of these films, teachers should (1) become familiar with the types of films available and the causes they relate to; (2) understand how the films can be used in language teaching; (3) have at least

a basic knowledge of narrative elements and cinematic techniques to allow both teachers and students to describe the films they choose to study; and (4) preview the films before showing them to students to make sure the content of the films is appropriate for their context.

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS OF FILMS

Important elements of the narrative of a film are the plot, the setting, the characters, and the point of view. Narrative techniques used in the nonprofit commercials presented here include telling a story from a subjective point of view, role reversals, and plot twists.

A story can be presented as if the narrator is an objective third party who watches the action from the sidelines, or it can be told

from a character’s subjective reality. This does not necessarily refer to the character’s optical viewpoint. It means that the audience perceives the world subjectively as it is reflected in the character’s consciousness—which may hear and see things that seem real to the character but are not real in the film’s world.

For example, a film titled *Fragile Childhood: Monsters* depicts children engaging in everyday activities, like playing on a playground and eating ice cream. The children, who look distraught, are accompanied by figures that seem to have sprung from a horror movie. The viewers are not sure what is going on until the question, “How do our children see us when we’ve been drinking?” is shown towards the end. It becomes clear that the audience is partaking in the children’s subjective reality by witnessing how they perceive their drunk

Technique	Examples
Shot sizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Aerial shot</i>. Captures the view of the action going on below • <i>Extreme long shot</i>. Often used as an establishing shot to set up the location for the scene; the frame is dominated by a landscape or a setting. • <i>Long shot</i>. Shows the character in the film in his or her entirety • <i>Medium shot</i>. Shows the subject “from around the knees or waist to the top of the head” (Archambault 2015) • <i>Close-up</i> and <i>extreme close-up</i>. The subject fills the entire frame. These shots are effective in conveying a character’s emotions and in drawing attention to significant objects and details in a scene (Kuhn and Westwell 2012, 84).
Camera angles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>High angle</i>. The camera is placed above the subject. • <i>Eye line</i>. The camera is placed at eye level. • <i>Low angle</i>. The camera is placed below eye level. • <i>Dutch angle</i>. The camera angle is deliberately slanted to one side, usually to create unease inside the mind of the viewer.
Camera movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tilt</i>. The camera moves up and down. • <i>Pan</i>. The camera moves horizontally. • <i>Track</i>. The camera is moved away from or towards a scene to follow the action. • <i>Hand-held camera</i>. The jerky movement conveys a sensation of authenticity and immediacy. • <i>Point-of-view shot</i>. A subjective shot from a character’s viewpoint
Special effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically or digitally created camera effects, such as reverse motion, fast motion, and slow motion

Table 1. Overview of common cinematic techniques

parents as monstrous figures. (Note: Links to films referenced in this article, among others, are listed in the Appendix.)

Amnesty International's *When You Don't Exist* portrays the traumatic experiences of refugees. The film uses a plot twist when it turns out that the roles have been reversed: the refugees are not from an African, Latin American, or Asian country but, contrary to expectations, white Europeans who seek refuge in Africa.

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

A number of techniques are inherent in filmmaking, including lighting, camera angles, camera movement, cuts and transitions, and sound. Filmmakers use them to, for example, create a dramatic effect, build suspense, influence the viewers' emotional reaction, and make us sympathize with a character.

Table 1 provides an overview of common cinematic techniques; more techniques and further explanations can be found at Archambault (2015) or by searching online for "cinematic techniques."

For example, camera angles and camera movement can produce attention-grabbing visual effects, and "the relationship between the camera and the object being photographed (i.e., the ANGLE) gives emotional information to an audience, and guides their judgment about the character or an object in the shot. The more extreme the angle . . . the more symbolic and heavily-loaded the shot" (Wilson 2013).

The film *A Tale of Two Mothers*—part of a vaccination campaign—employs both the split-screen technique and parallel editing to create the impression of simultaneity when showing the routines of two mothers looking after their babies. In *Refugees: The Shared Story of Harry and Ahmed*, the split-screen technique juxtaposes two persons on the screen and shows clips of their refugee experiences side by side to highlight their similarity. The commercial *WaterWalk* occasionally employs slow motion to draw the viewer's attention to

an African girl's long and arduous trip to fetch water. And in *Domestic Abuse Advertisement*, slow motion and other special effects show a victim's possessions being dragged into a pile, as if moved by an invisible hand.

Another key element of film language is sound, which includes speech (dialogue or voiceover), music, sound effects, and silence. Sound influences the viewer's emotional reaction, for example by building or releasing tension and by enhancing a dramatic or comic moment.

Soundtrack dissonance is the use of a soundtrack that contrasts with the visual subject or activity. The film *Talk to Your Kids About Alcohol* uses dissonant sound to convey its message: A father makes claims about the supposed benefits of social drinking; however, he speaks not with a male voice but with different children's voices. Then a message is shown: "Make sure you're the one who talks to your kids about the risks of alcohol." The incongruity between the kids' voices and the image of an adult man highlights the importance of parents talking to their kids about alcohol before other influential persons in their lives persuade them to consume it.

Animation is an art form that is sometimes used to explain complex relationships in a simplified way and communicate information with visuals. The short film *The Journey of Plastic* shows how a plastic bottle that is thrown away ends up in the food chain. *Educate a Girl and She Will Change the World* also uses visual instead of verbal input.

In the animated film *There's a Monster in My Kitchen*, close-ups and extreme close-ups are used to show the feelings of the protagonist. High-angle camera shots create a sense of menace.

WAYS TO EXPLOIT NONPROFIT COMMERCIALS IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Following are ways for teachers to use nonprofit commercials through topic- and project-based learning. The sequence presented

Teachers can show a nonprofit commercial to introduce a topic; they can also show two or more films that cover the same issue to compare their stylistic features and methods of persuasion.

here moves from (1) watching and analyzing a film as a class; (2) discussing the film and the topic; (3) independently watching and analyzing a different film individually or in groups, then sharing information and ideas; and (4) as an option, in groups, choosing a cause and making a storyboard and film to promote it.

TOPIC-BASED LEARNING

Teachers can show a nonprofit commercial to introduce a topic; they can also show two or more films that cover the same issue to compare their stylistic features and methods of persuasion. When teachers use these commercials, it is helpful to follow the method of incorporating pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing activities.

Pre-viewing activities

The following pre-viewing activities create expectations and prepare students to think about and discuss the topic:

- Pre-teach or review relevant vocabulary.
- Activate students' prior knowledge about the topic by asking what they know about it, showing pictures related to it, or having them talk about it with a partner.
- Listen to the soundtrack of the film or part of the film and speculate on what it is about.
- Watch the film or part of it without the soundtrack and speculate on what it is about.
- Show learners one or several screenshots from the film to make them curious and speculate about its content.

While-viewing activities

- Have students watch and listen for answers to questions—for example, about the setting and characters—and for key words.
- Ask students to observe and notice specific details.
- Stop the film before the end, especially in case of a plot twist or surprise ending, and speculate about what will happen.

Post-viewing activities

- Talk about the film: “How does the commercial make you feel? What do you think the main message is? Do you think the commercial is effective? Why/Why not?”
- Discuss the main message of the film.
- Discuss opinions and attitudes regarding the topic.
- Describe the plot of the film and compare the students' descriptions (especially for films that are ambiguous in some way).
- Assign students to write a review or comment on the film.
- Have the class conduct research on the topic.
- Study global issues that are often interlinked, such as environmental problems, water shortage, wars, and refugee crises.

It is recommended to watch a nonprofit commercial at least twice—the first time

to ask for feedback regarding content and the response to it, and the second time to pay attention to cinematic techniques and analyze them, thus promoting students' critical film literacy. The second viewing helps "learners analyze and interpret moving images, encouraging them to think critically about film itself and looking beyond the surface of the screen, to consider a film's intentions and techniques" (Donaghy 2015, 32). This competence is important because "any attempt to ask larger cultural or ideological questions about a film is inadequate if it does not include some reckoning with the work's formal dimensions" (Dix 2016, 12–13).

Additional viewings

Students might also benefit from additional viewings. Here is one possible approach:

First viewing. Watch and try to understand the language used and the overall message; become aware of possible emotional responses.

Second viewing. Watch and listen for specific words/terms, images, etc.

Third viewing. Watch and focus more on the narrative; after this viewing, work with a partner to summarize the film and ask questions, then discuss.

Fourth viewing. Look for cinematic techniques and details that might have been missed earlier; discuss in pairs or as a class.

Fifth viewing. Watch one more time for overall impact.

TWO TEACHING EXAMPLES BASED ON NONCOMMERCIAL FILMS

Rain Forests

The issue of the destruction of rain forests because of climate change is the focus of Greenpeace's film *Every Step Counts to Save the Amazon*. Language-focused activities include writing a description, collaborating with other students, expressing one's opinion, and talking about routines.

Pre-viewing activity

The matching exercise in Table 2 describes Greenpeace's mission (Greenpeace 2021). Write the exercise on the board and ask students to match the four verbs with the incomplete sentences to create a positive message.

Go over the answers with students: 1. B; 2. D; 3. A; 4. C.

Next, ask students what kind of organization they believe has established this mission. After they make their guesses (and maybe have guessed Greenpeace), ask them what they know about Greenpeace and what expectations they have about a film that the organization has made.

While-viewing activity

Tell students that they will view a short video produced by Greenpeace. After the first scene, pause the film and have students speculate on what the film is about. Then have them watch the film until the end, where the objective of the campaign becomes obvious. Next, students work in pairs to write a description of the events shown in the film. After finishing, the pairs compare their text with

___ 1. Prevent	A. ___ biodiversity in all its forms.
___ 2. Promote	B. ___ pollution and abuse of the earth's ocean, land, air and fresh water.
___ 3. Protect	C. ___ all nuclear threats.
___ 4. End	D. ___ peace, global disarmament and non-violence.

Table 2. Pre-viewing matching exercise

that of another pair. Depending on the size of the class, all or some of the descriptions can be read aloud and compared.

Students watch the film again (perhaps several more times) and answer the following questions:

- Is the intent of the film to inform or to persuade?
- Who is the target audience?
- What techniques are used to create an impact on the audience?
- What kind of sound is used? What is its effect?
- What information is provided in the inserted texts?
- What is meant by the appeal to get sneaker manufacturers to “refuse to buy the leather that’s killing our future”?
- How does the film make you feel?

Allocate one or two questions for each student to focus on (although everyone should answer the question “How does the film make you feel?”). After rewatching the film, students congregate in groups to share their notes, which are later discussed by the whole class. In this film, reverse motion is used to trace sneakers back to destruction of the Amazon rain forest. In addition, the film employs a combination of images, text, energetic music, sound effects, and special effects like flashback and flashing images to make an emotional appeal. You can also draw the students’ attention to the last scene, which shows the still unspoiled rain forest in an aerial shot. The film, which addresses consumers in general, does not provide any hard facts and figures; students can discuss why the filmmakers decided to use this approach and how effective they think it is.

Post-viewing activities

Tell students that agriculture is one major reason for the deforestation of tropical rain

forests. According to Rainforest Concern (2021), “the forests are cut down to make way for vast plantations where products such as bananas, palm oil, pineapple, sugar cane, tea and coffee are grown. As with cattle ranching, the soil will not sustain crops for long, and after a few years the farmers have to cut down more rainforest for new plantations.”

Ask students to brainstorm ways they can shop sustainably for food, clothes, and other products; students discuss their ideas in groups and then share with the class, while a student writes the suggested ideas on the board. Alternatively, students use self-adhesive notes for their ideas, which can later be clustered on the board according to different aspects. Students copy the results or take a photo. They then discuss with a partner the ideas they have already implemented into their lives and how consistently they practice them (always, often, sometimes, or never) and the ideas they will or may implement in the future.

Another option is for students to take the interactive self-test about their ecological footprint at Global Footprint Network (2021). Or you can prepare your own survey about students’ everyday habits, especially if you want to provide lower-level students with relevant vocabulary. Further materials, such as texts to read at home, are found at Rainforest Foundation US (2021).

Road Safety

A second example concerns road safety. One approach is for students to analyze and compare two campaign films. Language activities include listening comprehension, talking about personal mobility, discussing the effectiveness of road-safety campaigns, interacting in an informal discussion, and expressing opinions.

Pre-viewing activity

Ask students about the means of transport they use in their everyday lives and what criteria are important for them when deciding on a mode of mobility. Students ponder the advantages and disadvantages of different

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forms of mobility. Elicit the most important causes of road accidents and ask students if they remember any campaigns to promote road safety.

While-viewing activity

Inform students that they will listen to a road-safety campaign video before they watch it. Ask them to think about what the song they will hear is about, to imagine what is happening in the film, and to note down key words. Then play the sound of *Dramatic Texting and Driving PSA*. After the class discusses what they heard, ask the following questions for further viewings of the film:

- What situation is shown in the film?
- Is the intent of the film to inform or to persuade?
- What techniques are used to create an impact on the audience?
- Who is the target audience?
- How does the film make you feel?
- Do you think it is effective?

The class now watches the video—multiple times if necessary—and discusses these questions. Then tell students that they will watch another film related to road safety: *Speeding. How Sorry Will You Be?* First, ask students to determine what the relationship of the driver and the passenger is and to note down examples of their relationship that come through in their dialogue (the two men are friends, and their language is informal; for example, they address each other with “mate” and “man”). Then students watch the film again to look for similarities and differences between this film and the previous one.

Both films appeal to emotions. A key difference is that the first film stops the action at the moment before the accident, caused by somebody who has been texting while driving. The two drivers have a calm conversation that is not congruent with the obviously dangerous situation. The second film shows the events leading to an accident, while the accident itself and its consequences are just hinted at. In contrast to the first film, filmic time in the second film corresponds to actual time, and the viewers are put into the shoes of the passenger, as the film is shot mainly from his point of view. The viewers are invited to become actively involved by the inserted texts, “Tell him to slow down,” and “Don’t say anything,” instead of just consuming the film passively. Finally, a surgeon as a trustworthy authority figure addresses the viewers directly and comments on each choice.

Students then comment on which campaign film they consider more effective and why. They also discuss which tactics they feel are most effective for road-safety campaign videos: appealing to emotions, presenting reality (showing real accidents), incorporating humor, presenting facts and figures, or other ideas they may have.

Post-viewing activities

This activity provides students with the opportunity to look at the issue of road safety from multiple perspectives. Depending on the size of the class, students work in groups of four or six students. The objective is to come up with ideas to make driving safer. Half of the students in each group represent the interests of car manufacturers and drivers, which may mean designing bigger cars, incorporating more safety features in cars, building more roads, and imposing few restrictions such as speed limits. The other half represents the interests of those who want to promote alternative

forms of mobility that make people less reliant on car ownership, such as carpooling, using public transport or cycling, and making driving less attractive, possibly with lower speed limits and fewer parking spaces. Each group discusses these ideas, agrees on some, and presents them to the class. Depending on the level and the needs of the class, students can come up with their own ideas or read a text regarding alternative

forms of transport or car safety before the discussion.

If you want, a follow-up activity is to have students create an idea for their own film to promote road safety. What would they show? What language would they use? Or students might choose a different topic—perhaps a local issue—and describe how they would promote their cause in a film of their own.

Analysis of a Nonprofit Commercial	
Plot and story	What is the film about?
Setting and props	Where does the action take place? What objects are shown?
Character(s)	Who are the characters? What do we learn about the characters during the commercial?
Events	What significant events are shown in the film?
Point of view	Is the point of view objective, or is a character's point of view shown?
Sound	Is there speech (including dialogue or voiceover), music, sound effects, or silence? To what effect is the sound used? Is there a dissonance (incongruity) between the pictures and the soundtrack?
Camera	Are there any close-ups or extreme close-ups or any other remarkable camera shots? If so, to what effect are they used? Are there any noteworthy examples of camera movement and/or camera angles?
Other cinematic techniques	Are any other cinematic techniques (cuts, color, split screen, reverse motion, etc.) used?
Text	Is text inserted in the film? Why is it used?
Slogan	What is the slogan? What does it mean?
Aims/Message	What are the aims and the message of the film? Is the call to action implicit or explicit?
Campaign	Does the film form part of a larger campaign?
Methods of persuasion	What methods of persuasion are used? (Cognitive arguments may include facts and figures; appeals to emotion might use music, sound, and images.)
Target audience	Who is the target audience? Everybody, people who need help, potential donors?
Response to the film	How does the audience respond to the commercial? Is it effective or not?

Table 3. Analysis of a nonprofit commercial

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to evaluate sources of information critically instead of
just consuming media superficially.**

Activities for Practicing Productive Oral or Writing Skills

Students can also watch and analyze a nonprofit commercial with the specific aim of developing productive language skills, either by making a presentation or by writing an analysis or review.

Step 1. Go over the questions in Table 3. Make sure students understand the meaning and purpose of each question.

Step 2. Students use the questions in Table 3 as a guideline for an analysis of a nonprofit commercial. They can work in small groups, study relevant information on cinematic techniques, analyze the techniques used in the film that has been assigned to them, and share their findings on a poster or in a presentation.

Step 3. For the actual task, you can select the commercials, but students’ motivation is usually

increased when they choose a film themselves about a cause and/or an NGO they identify with and feel strongly about. The analysis can be based on Table 3. As mentioned above, it is crucial that students possess a set of skills to evaluate sources of information critically instead of just consuming media superficially. This is also important when viewing a noncommercial film and visiting the website of the organization that released it, especially if it is not a government agency or a widely known NGO. These skills enable learners to detect misinformation (shared accidentally), disinformation (shared deliberately), and a possible hidden agenda contained in the film or the website. The questions in Table 4 help learners check the facts, while Table 5 provides expressions that may be useful when students describe an NGO.

Step 4. Working in groups, students prepare presentations. These can take the form of

Fact-Checking Questions and Techniques
What organization released the film? Is it affiliated with or funded by another organization? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a search engine to find out what other sites say about it.
What is the evidence of the claims that the film makes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a search engine to find out if the information can be verified. • Check whether the sources are reputable (academic experts, quality press, official institutions, etc.).
Does the argument develop logically, step by step? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do other sources make the same claims?
What are the sources of any figures/graphs/statistics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check whether the sources are trustworthy.
Do graphs and statistics represent facts correctly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check graphs for distortions. Use a search engine to check facts. • Watch “How to Spot a Misleading Graph” (Gaslowitz 2017).
What pictures are used? Do they actually back up the claim, or have they been taken from another context? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a reverse image search.

Table 4. Fact-checking guidelines for a nonprofit commercial or website

posters, talks to the class, or another format that fits the context. Another possibility is the jigsaw approach: Each group member is an “expert” on his or her group’s film, and a member of each group moves to join a new group, where each person gives a short talk or presentation about his or her group’s film.

Step 5. Students make their presentations or, in case of a written task, are invited to read and comment on (some of) the course members’ analyses or reviews. Whichever format is used, there should be time allotted for questions and answers about each group’s film and presentation.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Finally, noncommercial films can be used as a resource for students to engage in project-based learning. It is important to prepare and train learners in making their own visual texts and complete multimodal assignments because “people who can read a variety of texts critically, and who can produce texts in a range of media, will be best equipped to succeed as citizens and workers in our increasingly complex technological world” (Donaghy 2015, 13). Modern technology,

such as cell phones, digital cameras, and free editing programs, makes it easy for amateurs to produce a film of satisfactory quality.

In this project, students create their own nonprofit commercial in English. It can also be implemented as a cross-curricular activity involving English and art, or another subject. The activity is a form of project-based learning that offers students an opportunity to examine a subject thoroughly and find appropriate solutions. According to Vega (2012), research shows “that when implemented well, project-based learning (PBL) can increase retention of content and improve students’ attitudes toward learning, among other benefits.” Project work fosters creativity, teamwork, work organization, and collaborative learning. Students have to communicate in English, especially when the group is international, and use their creativity and critical-thinking skills for implementing the project. The outcome has a social value when students are given the opportunity to present their films to a wider audience, for example on social media or at a film screening.

The film *Cyber Bullying: Create No Hate* was made by a 13-year-old boy after he was a victim of cyberbullying. It went viral and is a

Expressions and Useful Vocabulary for Describing an NGO	
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization was founded/set up/established by _____ in _____.
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Director/Chief Executive is _____. There is a/an Management Team/Executive Council. The headquarters are located in _____. The organization currently has _____ employees/ _____ members. There are _____ offices in more than _____ countries. The organization consists of _____ divisions. The organization is funded by _____.
Logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Its logo features/symbolizes _____.
Cause(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization’s mission is _____. The organization fights for/promotes/supports _____/ is committed to helping _____.

Table 5. Expressions and useful vocabulary for describing an NGO

powerful example of a nonprofessional film that raises awareness of a problem.

Suggested Project Steps

Step 1. In groups, students choose a topic or cause that they are interested in.

Step 2. Go over the key aspects of the project, which are to make a storyboard (and, optionally, a film) to promote the chosen cause, and the criteria you will use for evaluation. When evaluating, you might consider the effectiveness of the product in conveying the intended message, effective and creative use of cinematic techniques, use of language in the film or in a presentation of the project, collaboration, and other factors that are relevant in your context.

Step 3. Students work collaboratively to create a storyboard for their own nonprofit

commercial. A storyboard depicts the shots of each scene in sequential order. Each picture comes with a description of the action, sound, and camera action. The storyboards can be made online or drawn by hand. Online storyboard makers include Wideo (2021) and Sherman (2021). Table 6 provides key aspects for planning a film project.

Step 4. If time and resources allow, students shoot and edit the film. In case of time restraints, this step can be omitted, and the storyboard is presented and evaluated instead.

Step 5. The films (or storyboards) are shown and evaluated according to criteria to be established beforehand—for example, consistency of the message, creativity, technical aspects, and correctness of language.

Key Aspects for Planning a Film Project	
Aim of the commercial	Topic: _____ Aim: raise awareness, issue a warning, ask for donations, etc.
Storytelling elements	Decisions about the plot
Sequence of scenes	
First scene	Title page (This is usually omitted in a nonprofit commercial.)
Second scene	Introduction to the location: Wide shot Introduction to the character(s): Medium shot—from the waist up
Following scene(s)	Development of the situation: A problem or conflict is shown that may reach a climax.
Penultimate scene	Resolution: The aim of the film is shown.
Last scene	Call to action Slogan Contact information
Artistic and technical decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue or voiceover, music, and sound effects • Camera shots, angles, and movement • Special effects • Colors • Text
Practical decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actors, locations, and props • Technical hardware and software • Time needed

Table 6. Key aspects for planning a film project

CONCLUSION

Nonprofit commercials are an inspiring but often overlooked resource in language teaching. Teachers can use these short and thought-provoking films in different scenarios with communicative language activities and strategies and to help students practice skills that form part of Bloom's so-called higher-thinking skills, such as creating (using information to create something new), evaluating (critically examining information and making judgments), and analyzing (taking information apart and exploring relationships) (Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning 2020). In addition, these films can promote the development of crucial transferable skills, such as media and film literacy, that are needed in the twenty-first century.

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APPENDIX

Selected Nonprofit Films and Public Service Announcements

Topic	Video	Features
Access to water	WaterAid. 2014. "Water Walk." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4V-KoJGGJ4s	Elements of a documentary
Alcohol abuse	Drinkaware.co.uk. 2014. "Talk to Your Kids About Alcohol." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJgfLt3euYY	Soundtrack incongruity; adult man speaks in children's voices
	Lasinen Lapsuus. 2012. "Fragile Childhood: Monsters." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwdUXSg4yNk	Elements of a horror movie
Animal rights	Vier Pfofen. 2011. "Stop the Ugly Face of Animal Testing!" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2p1RoqHcAP0	Special effects
Bullying	Culhane, L. 2016. "Cyber Bullying: Create No Hate." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV5v0m6pEMs	Personal experience; nonprofessional video
Destruction of rain forests	Greenpeace UK. 2020. "There's a Monster in My Kitchen." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rljVDo_u8c	Animation; close-ups and extreme close-ups; different camera angles; music
	Greenpeace USA. 2009. "Every Step Counts to Save the Amazon." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYfR5YZAeWE	Reverse motion
Domestic violence	RAINN. 2019. "#WontStayQuiet." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTbq7ke76GA&t=6s	Rhythm
	Scottish Government. 2020. "Domestic Abuse Advertisement." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rGwjLG-5eA	Slow motion; special effects; muted colors
Driving: Texting/Speeding	Transport For NSW. 2014. "Speeding. How Sorry Will You Be?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqv-6gK9tjk	Point-of-view shot; two versions
	WJBF. 2014. "Dramatic Texting and Driving PSA." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7ljxDjwDjU	Interrupted action
Environmental problems	World Wildlife Fund International. 2020. "The Findings of the Living Planet Report Are In: Our Relationship with Nature Is Broken." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6_vgpG4fPk	Rhythmic music with images and video graphics
	World Wildlife Fund International. 2019. "The Journey of Plastic." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drwg5PYfKss	Animation
Girls' education	Marie Claire France. 2014. "Educate a Girl and She Will Change the World." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05qZyoznfwk	Animated infographic
Literacy	ELINET. 2016. "Results after 2 Years." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEldfXC57d8	Animated infographic
Mental health	Anna Freud NCCF. 2018. "We All Have Mental Health." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxIDKZHw3-E	Close-ups; muted colors; echo sound; animation
Refugees	Amnesty International. 2012. "When You Don't Exist." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OUpsWCvE38	Role reversal
	UNICEF. 2017. "Refugees: The Shared Story of Harry and Ahmed." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APWyeCuvk5Q	Elements of a documentary
Vaccination appeals	UNICEF. 2021. "David Beckham: Vaccines Bring Us Closer." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XM_Q8D8me8	Celebrity-powered campaign
	UNICEF. 2015. "A Tale of Two Mothers." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8NEi1W9nnl	Split-screen technique