OIRFET

Open innovative resources
for filmmaking, education
and training

- The Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Lodz (PWSFTviT)

  Lodz, Poland

- The Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU)

  Prague, Czech Republic

- The Academy of Dramatic Art (ADU)

  Zagreb, Croatia

- Academy of Performing Arts - Film and Television Faculty (VSMU)

  Bratislava, Slovakia
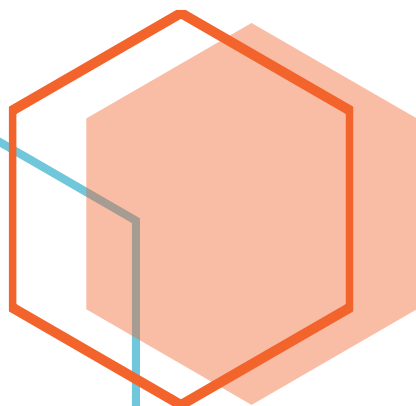
KNOW HOW OF THE PROJECT

**Open innovative resource
for filmmaking education and training.**

The following document contains a set of guidance and recommendations on how to

create useful material for editing practice.

Introduction

Art education is a specific form of knowledge transfer. In this type of education, it is difficult to unequivocally refer to the scientific tenets and in particular to the sharing of experience and knowledge held by the lecturers who are, simultaneously, practitioners in the area of film art. On the basic level, it is obviously possible to teach the operation of editing tools, to share the theory about this form of this creative activity and to refer the students to the literature tackling this field of knowledge. However, the vital question is whether the creative process can be taught. The students can be taught how to think about creative problems in the artistic process and the modes of solving them; however, the art of editing can only be mastered via own experience and artistic practice. In general, this principle refers to any area of art. Thus, one has to wonder about the purpose of institutions in the area of art education if a given field of art can be practised without frequenting such establishments. The tasks of educational institutions are dual. First of all, they draft curricula for the students, by means of which they can amass as many creative experiences as possible: to work creatively and to solve creative problems in practice. On the other hand, another task of art schools is to create an environment for the students which is going to support them and verify the effects of this practice on an ongoing basis via experienced practitioners in a given field of art. This part of the process of education relies on the confrontation of students' experiences with the knowledge of seasoned practitioners in a given field of art and consists in talks, exchange of experiences, offering guidelines and critical feedback on the students' practical work.

Needs and motivations

One of the primary problems in practical education in the area of film editing is procuring material for the practice. Usually, film editing students acquire their skills whilst assisting at director's and cinematographer's films that are being prepared at the school. However, materials of this type are encumbered with a large number of errors. Due to the fact that the directors and cinematographers are also in the process of education, the role of a student-editor consists in repairing the filming errors in the delivered materials. Hence, the primary work of a film editor consists in arranging the material into a whole. However, the possibility of checking alternative variants of narrative or styling the storyline is often missing. This is far from the ideal of artistic creativity. The second type of material that is used by the students are the professional materials supplied by the lecturers and received in trust from film producers. In turn, the drawback of these materials is that - due to licence requirements - they can only circulate in a closed range of classes offered by a given lecturer and cannot be shared in any manner. All of the limitations above gave us an incentive to look for a third, alternative mode of sourcing teaching materials.
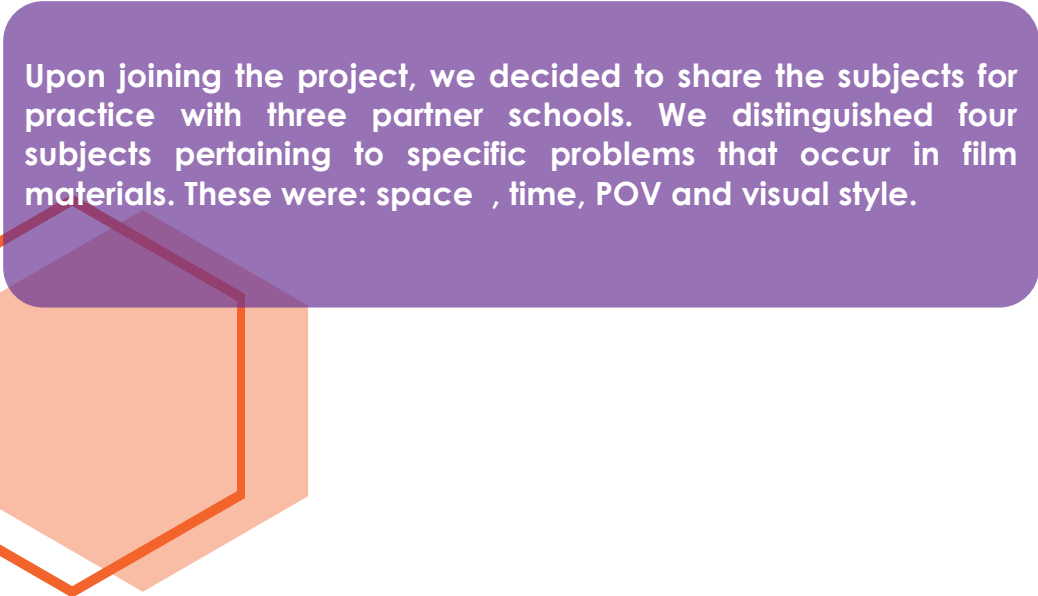
A research

At the initial stage of the project discussed here, we carried out a survey pertaining to the sources of the teaching materials which are used by the persons who do not have access to professional film materials and who wish to learn the art of editing in practice. There are commercial on-line platforms which make professional film materials available against payment. It is also possible to find materials that are procured on the pen source basis, yet sources of this type have certain drawbacks convergent with the materials described above as student short films. Another drawback of the generally available commercial materials is their range, limited primarily to film previews, short forms and commercials. When working on materials of this type, it is difficult to gain skills pertaining to the issues of narrative or dramaturgy that are required during the editing of feature or documentary films.

Character of didactic materials

Such shortage of didactic materials gave rise to the idea of setting up - together with the lecturers from other European film schools - a generally available database of film materials useful for the teaching of film editing. What is the character of such materials? Professional film materials as part of a single scene require a comprehensive, multi-layered solving of a number of narrative and dramaturgical problems. When working on such exercise, the student must tackle the issue of orientation in the film space, time-lines, constructing the characters and their motivation along with dramaturgical tension in a scene. Additionally, the teaching resources for editing should be reduced so that they do not require comprehensive solving of all of the aspects described above simultaneously, but allow for practising individual isolated editing problems.

By assumption, such material should offer a possibility of maximising the field for experimentation. This element also sets the didactic exercise apart from professional materials, which are subjected to the previously defined idea of a narrative and an editing intention

Upon joining the project, we decided to share the subjects for practice with three partner schools. We distinguished four subjects pertaining to specific problems that occur in film materials. These were: space , time, POV and visual style.

How to make your own materials?

To specify the subsequent elements of the know-how, the "Space" subject will be used in a further part the example, which is implemented at the Łódź Film School.

We believe that our example will outline the characteristics of the work on educational material

During the project, we were striving to make the preparation and creation of the practice material an integral part of the process of education. We asked the senior students of Film Editing (4th study year) to imagine the ideal, in their opinion, material for practising editing and acquiring confidence in solving problems with orientation in the film space. The group, together with tutors assigned to individual tasks, collected theoretical materials about the subject, for example pertaining to the concept of space.

The concept work started with compiling film scenes picturing the diverse applications of space in a film. Another stage was compilation of theoretical materials referring to the broadly understood subject of space. We collected materials of biological and physiological perception of space along with literary materials, including philosophical concepts of space: from Plato, Aristotle, Kant, through to the scientific concept of Newton's Absolute Time, up to Leibnitz's and Einstein's theories. During the ensuing meeting, several various concepts of the exercise were drafted, and two films were accepted.

The entire process was also didactic. The practice was completed by the students assisted by the experienced cinematographer and set designer with the support of a competent unit responsible for the servicing of the media house.
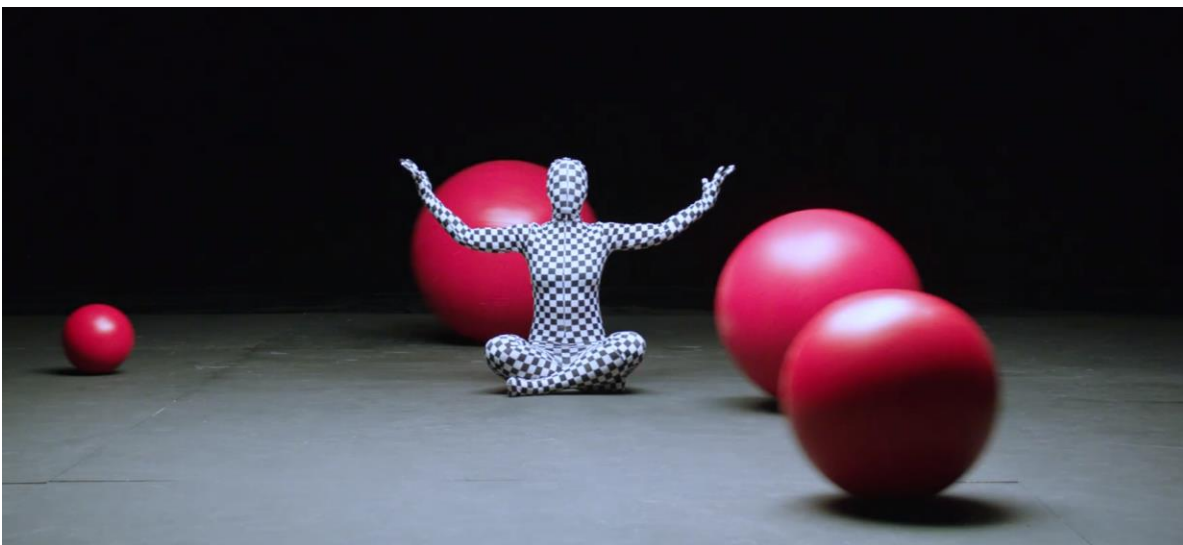
SPACE – case study

The purpose was to create a multi-dimensional space where our character was placed. On-screen space is the two-dimensional surface of the frame, while cinematic space is the three-dimensional world in which the characters live and die. The cinematic space is created in the viewer's imagination by the content of individual frames, the content built by the connection of the ensuing shots and the sound which constitutes the space.

The filmed content is quite different from classical footage as it does not have a specific narrative structure.

There is an object (a ball), a character (a girl, a boy and a mysterious creature), and the space. The footage can be described as montage Lego blocks. The footage from "Space" contains over 400 takes (closer and wider shots for one take) covering movements of the object (red ball) and simplified actions of three characters (Boy, Girl, Creature). The elements of action are situated in a non-descriptive surrounding to reduce space parameters within a shot to a minimum, enhancing the understanding of the film space as a mental construct. The footage can be used in a playful way to experiment with shaping the film space through editing or in a more formal way through training, starting with simple assignments for beginners, which focus on basic topics of film grammar and editing rules (scene matching, continuity, axis of action, etc.), as well as more complex narrative tasks when the editor chooses characters and develops his own story. The footage is mute and can be used for training in sound design.

SPACE – case study

The second material, "New Media Horror", features three characters: Student, Janitor and Creature wandering at night through the New Media Building at the Lodz Film School campus. There is no ready story line. It's up to the editor to decide what happened. Is it a story of a chase, of being lost in a maze, of getting trapped - whichever scenario comes to the editor's mind... or maybe it can be mix it with Space footage?

FOOTAGE characteristics

- Nonlinear
- Open structure
- Able to create complex sequences
- Lego blocks structure
- Focused on one editing issue, narrative or dramaturgical problem
- Non-dialogue or minimum
- Adaptable for many types of excercises
- beginning and ending of story possibilities

How to use the materials?

The work culminated with a workshop during which the lecturers and students of all years participating in the project could confront the results of the exercise. During the workshop, the students received the previously edited task themes. Below, please find an introduction to the task 'Space' and sample exercises that can be used during the classes.

EXCERCISES

You decide what kind of space you want to build from the attached footage. Will the space be open or closed, will the characters that appear in your story meet or not? Alternatively, do you want to build a box story? Anything is possible and lies in the editor's imagination. The assignments mainly focus on fulfilling the task of building the film space, not necessarily focusing on building the dramatic plot.

1. By using a selection of the footage (e.g.15 takes), build a space that loops around itself.
2 How do you enclose a character in a maze? Guide your protagonist into a space that gives the viewer the feeling of being in a maze.
3. A group task. Each participant edits, for example, 5-6 shots of a sequence and passes the last shot to the next person, who starts their part of the sequence with that shot.
4. Build a Space within a Space. Look for shots that will allow you to build a multidimensional sequence where one space is contained within the next, like a matroyshka doll.
5. Continuity: Select 10 takes and edit several sequences in which a character or an object moves in a precisely described trajectory (square, spiral, back and forth, etc.)
6. Parallel action: Show two separate objects moving in different directions in parallel editing
7. Sound design: Use diegetic and non-diegetic sound effects to enhance the sense of spatiality.

Production management

To end the know-how of film creation, it is necessary to mention the production aspects of the project. Materials are always prepared as part of a specific budget which makes the persons responsible for their production face a number of challenges. All films were made in the school, with the use of film equipment owned by the school. The Multimedia Service Department, which services the media house, together with electricians and light technicians were engaged in the production of the materials. Heads of departments were lecturers, while the remaining functions were distributed among the editing students, who decided on their own what they wanted to be responsible for. Hence, they worked under the supervision of lecturers specialising in a given field: a cameraman, a director or a set designer. They were supervising the directing process, assisted the camera or were responsible for costumes, set designs or DIT. Taking the purpose of the project into account, sound was not needed on the set. In assumption, the films were deprived of the sound track, as the sound was added by the students in line with their creative concept.

DO'S AND DON'TS when making your own footage

- Do not make it too vast – it confuses and overwhelms students

- Keep in mind different level of expertise of the users

- Think ahead of the excercises might be proposed with your footage

- Use storyboard to plan everything precisely

- Keep in mind the quality of the materials: use professional equipment and crew

- Create a non dialogue matherial

- Engage students and Phd candidates to create matherials with you – it's a great experiance for them as well.

- Whem working on the concept use examples from film clasic and avantgarde masterpieces to stimulate creativity and quick insight to the examined topic

- during shooting - make various takes of shots with alternative mood and meaning to give variety of choices for alternative interpretation.

- Never forget to have silent take with nonverbal reactions only.

- create frontal close up of every character in every scene. It eventualy enables flashbacks or jumps in time generally

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