

## **Using short films to achieve ACTFL world-readiness standards**

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### **Abstract**

This reflective article explores how short films may be incorporated into the World Languages Classroom to achieve the American Council on Language Teaching and Learning (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards. Having the definition and benefits of short films as a starting point, the authors suggest a pedagogical sequence. The sequence begins with the criteria for choosing a short film and setting the learning goals. It is followed by a before, while, and after watching tasks aligned to Communication and Cultures standards. The pedagogical sequence progresses by engaging students in activities that encourage them to expand their knowledge or create a product in response to the film, thereby addressing the Communities and Connections standards. The sequence concludes with assessments focusing on Comparison standards to evaluate understanding, gained knowledge, and revisit goals. Assessment tools such as checklists and thinking skills questions are provided to ensure comprehensive coverage of the five areas from ACTFL World-Readiness Standards. The article offers practical implications, planning strategies, and resources -including a lesson plan template, adaptable communication activities, and curated lists of short films and related websites- for incorporating short films at any language proficiency level.

*Keywords:* authentic materials, short films, ACTFL standards, culture, pedagogical sequence, pre, while, and after watching

### **Introduction**

This article is structured to guide readers through a comprehensive exploration of short films as effective, authentic resources in language acquisition. It begins by defining short films and their relevance in the language learning context. Subsequently, it delves into a literature review that examines the affordances, benefits, and pedagogical implications of integrating short films into language instruction. Building upon this foundation, the article introduces an original pedagogical sequence comprising five stages: choosing a film, setting goals, applying video tasks sequence, responding to the film, and assessment. This sequence is designed in alignment with the

ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages, ensuring that the sequence supports the development of communication skills, cultural understanding, and interdisciplinary connections. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of following a structured pedagogical sequence in language learning, highlighting how such an approach facilitates systematic skill development, enhances learner engagement, and promotes the effective acquisition of language and intercultural competence using authentic resources such as short films.

### **Defining Short Films**

The use of authentic materials has been a theme of interest in education. Gilmore (2019) defines authentic materials as those with no pedagogical intervention; intended for real audiences in real contexts, conveying a real message. In this article, authentic materials refer to resources that display language and culture as presented in real-world contexts, without modification or adaptation for instructional purposes. Authentic materials include written texts like newspapers, magazines, and blogs, as well as spoken media such as news, podcasts, and songs.

Short films belong to the category of authentic materials. Kabadayi (2012) describes short films as a “film production type which makes an effort to achieve the theme it addresses in a short time” (p. 316). The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences defines a short film as a motion picture with a running time of 40 minutes or less, including all credits. Nguyen (2018) further categorizes short films as a form of digital storytelling, characterized by “short stories (3-5 minutes) accompanied by recorded sound (such as narration or music) and digital images” (p. 72).

Sundquist (2010) identifies key characteristics of short films: brevity, with a maximum running time of 40 minutes; open-endedness, allowing for adaptations according to activities; innovation, encompassing various genres such as animation, documentaries, commercials, comedy, and live action as well as others included in cinema; compact storytelling, where narrative devices and plot move quickly, often without much background information. These attributes facilitate the design of meaningful educational tasks using authentic materials.

Short films can be categorized based on the amount of dialogue: films with constant dialogue, films with intermittent dialogue, and silent films with no dialogue. Thaler (2017), citing Donaghy (2015), classifies short films by length, genre, and topic, introducing categories such as branded shorts (commercials or campaigns), social shorts (addressing social issues), literal music videos (lyrics in visuals), animated lectures (experts’ narrations on topics), silent (no dialogues), and mashups (combinations of multiple short films). These diverse categories and characteristics offer a variety of authentic audiovisual materials, making short films an engaging resource for world languages learning.

Recognizing that including authentic resources can be time-consuming for educators, this article aims to explain how short films may be incorporated into the world languages classroom, emphasizing alignment with the American Council on Language Teaching and Learning (ACTFL) World-Readiness Standards by designing a pedagogical sequence.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Affordances of Using Short Films**

Short films offer multifaceted benefits in language acquisition, enhancing communicative skills, fostering intercultural competence, and promoting student engagement. Research indicates

that short films can significantly improve speaking and writing abilities. For instance, studies by Hoang (2022), Mazhar Hameed (2016), Hartatik and Rahmah (2016), and Madiyoh (2018) demonstrate that incorporating films into lessons boosts learners' confidence and facilitates the use of authentic language materials. Didkovska (2018) attributes improvements in listening and speaking to visual cues like facial expressions and gestures inherent in short films. Furthermore, Irawan (2023), Muhamad and Riska (2020), and Sri Wahyuni (2017) highlight the effectiveness of animated short films in enhancing students' descriptive and narrative writing skills.

Short films develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC). According to the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL & ACTFL, 2017), ICC involves the ability to interact effectively with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Mazhar Hameed (2016) and Didkovska's (2018) idea of cultural and cross-cultural situations being present in authentic contexts with accurate language is reinforced by Herrero (2019) when emphasizing that short films, as cultural artifacts, broaden learners' visual, translingual, and transcultural competencies. Similarly, Herten and Harrington (2015) note that the visual content in films aids in understanding language nuances and cultural contexts. Since short films show ways of living in different cultures, teachers may search for country-specific short films that will expose students to different countries and provide cultural awareness. As a reference, Appendix A provides a list of the most popular short films, and Appendix B provides a list of websites of only Spanish short films, some include lesson plans or class activities, and others include summaries and recommendations. Short films are an excellent cultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural communicative device. Teachers can use the information on these websites or short films to have students investigate, explain, and reflect on different practices, products, and perspectives of cultures or countries.

Moreover, short films enhance student motivation and engagement. Sundquist (2010) observes that the brevity and flexibility of short films allow for repeated viewings, facilitating both vocabulary acquisition and thematic discussions. The limited number of characters and concise narratives help maintain students' attention and encourage active participation. Additionally, the diverse themes presented in short films enable educators to address various curricular goals, fostering critical thinking and analytical skills (Kabadayi, 2012; Wagner, 2021).

Students' attention span is controlled; additionally, the variety of tasks makes the class more engaging. Also, for those students who lose motivation when they listen to a foreign language for a long period, teachers may even choose silent short films and have students only watch and then produce the language either orally or in writing by creating conversations or scripts, for example. In conclusion, "films can be regarded as a form of edutainment because they combine pleasure and learning" (Nasiba, 2023, p. 72)

Short films serve as a powerful tool in language acquisition, fostering creativity and facilitating thematic exploration. Wagner (2021) emphasizes that the combination of images, motion, and sound in short films creates immersive storylines that engage students and inspire them to become storytellers. For instance, implementing the iPed model, Mantei and Kervin (2017) guided students in creating digital narratives, highlighting the effectiveness of structured approaches in storytelling activities. Nguyen (2018) further supports this by noting that digital storytelling enhances language and literacy development. Christie (2016) reaffirms these insights, stating that "short films offer profound experiences for both teachers and learners" (p. 101).

Beyond storytelling, short films encompass various themes, making them versatile

resources across curricula. Chang (2020) and Wagner (2021) illustrate how films can address complex topics in fields like marketing and social studies. In language classrooms, educators can select short films that align with universal themes, such as empathy and sharing, to stimulate critical thinking and cultural awareness. For example, in the Spanish class to address the topic of the Values of Empathy and Sharing, teachers may show the 2014 3.5-minute film commercial of Loteria Navidad or Cuerdas, a 2013 10-minute animated short film. Kabadayi (2012) observes that “the skill of the student to evaluate human relations, interpret the mutual interaction of the individual-and-the society relationships, and establish the cause-and effect relation increases” (p. 317). Engaging with films enhances students' abilities to evaluate human relationships and understand societal dynamics.

### **Incorporating Short Films in the Language Classroom**

Choosing films is one of the first endeavors. Educators can rely on various online platforms and repositories that offer curated short films, some accompanied by lesson plans and activities (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The selection process should align with specific instructional goals, considering factors such as cultural relevance, linguistic complexity, genre, duration, and thematic content. Thaler (2017) emphasizes criteria including linguistic complexity, audiovisual comprehensibility, didactic exploitability, topical relevance, and the interplay between sound and vision. Muhamad and Riska (2020) advocate for choosing short films that relate to the school curriculum, provide opportunities for all students regarding race, gender, moral values, and sexuality, and are age-appropriate in terms of emotional, cultural, and intellectual development. Once the reason for choosing a short film is determined, it is suggested that the teacher pick one of the following three categories: silent short films, animation short films, or dialogue short films.

Nasiba (2023) suggests practical strategies for cultural instruction through films, such as giving clear instructions, utilizing engaging materials, allocating sufficient time to complete activities, encouraging students' participation, and offering constructive feedback. All in all, when choosing short films, teachers should consider the target population, the purpose or class goal, the ACTFL standards and can-do statements, the cultural significance, and the school appropriateness. Finally, it is advisable to use videos for 2 to 10 minutes in such a way that they can be exploited in a single lesson.

In world languages, short films can be used at different levels, which means that the same film may be adapted for the novice, intermediate, advanced, superior, and distinguished levels depending on the chosen can-do Statements. NCSSFL and the ACTFL (2017) clarify the type of tasks for the different modes of communication, stating that, in Interpretive Communication, the learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics. In Interpersonal Communication, the learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions. In Presentational Communication, the learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers. (ACTFL, 2017).

Didkovska (2018) outlines three pedagogical approaches for utilizing short films: Basic Telling Techniques, focusing on manipulating film elements; Cs and Ss, emphasizing character, story, setting, camera, color, and sound; and the “Tell Me” approach, which fosters in-depth discussions through guided questioning (p. 19). Christie (2016) and Bueno (2009) suggest using short films following a before, while, and after-watching lesson sequence. In this article, that

sequence is followed by considering interpretive, interpersonal, or presentational tasks, which implies students may engage in any task at any stage. Teachers may plan a before, while, and after watching sequence with an interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational task each; or teachers may decide to choose one interpretive, interpersonal, or presentational task to do before, while, and after watching. In any case, it is up to the teacher how many tasks s/he wants to incorporate for each one of the lesson sequences of before, while, and after.

Resources such as Soriano's (2010) handbook provide practical examples of integrating short films into Spanish language instruction, offering activities that correspond with textbook content. Enright (2019) favors this idea by stating that authentic resources like short films are ideal to use with any student, at any level, as a supplement to the textbook curriculum. Canalejas et al. (2020) present an e-book with comprehensive lesson plans centered around six short films, targeting elementary to intermediate learners. The e-book provides examples of interpretive and interpersonal activities, language focus exercises, and cultural lessons. Domenech (2021) curates a list of award-winning short films suitable for conversational courses, emphasizing themes and genres conducive to discussion. Recuero (2023) provides a list of all the Spanish Short Films that made an impact in 2023. Not only are books available to exemplify short film implementation, but websites are, too. Online platforms like Bongers' (2023) blog and websites such as TodoELE and La Clase de ELE for Spanish class offer additional resources and lesson plans for educators (See Appendix C for a complete list of websites with already-made lesson plans or class activities).

Technological advancements have increased the accessibility and popularity of short films, with platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, and educational websites providing an abundance of options. Al Hosni (2023) notes that developments such as artificial intelligence, mobile devices and distribution sites facilitate the integration of short films into language instruction, offering authentic materials that align with pedagogical goals.

Assessment is essential to the implementation of the pedagogical sequence. Rouxel-Cubberly (2014) conducted a semester-long cultural and linguistic project wherein students created film trailers based on films studied during the term. Informal assessments included vocabulary brainstorming before watching the film, paragraph writing by describing places shown in the films, and voice recording describing a picture from a scene from the film. The formal assessment consisted of watching a clip from the film and telling what happened and what will happen. To assess comprehension of the films, participants used the OWL software to build self-graded multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer questions. This project clearly shows how using films permits the inclusion of multiple forms of assessment in the classroom. Teachers may employ rubrics to measure achievement of communication at interpretive, interpersonal, or presentational levels. ACTFL provides performance descriptors and rubrics to guide such assessments (ACTFL, 2012).

### **Pedagogical Sequence**

#### **Using films: A pedagogical sequence incorporating the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards**

After exploring the definition, characteristics, benefits, sources, and implementation strategies of short films in language learning, it is crucial to set a structured pedagogical sequence that integrates ACTFL world-readiness standards and key components from the literature review.

When revising the characteristics of the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards, it becomes evident that they align closely with the pedagogical advantages of incorporating short films into language instruction, as discussed in the literature. For example:

- **Communication** addresses the development of communication skills across different modes.
- **Cultures** focus on intercultural communicative competence (ICC) by exploring cultural practices, products, and perspectives.
- **Connections** promote interdisciplinary learning and career readiness by linking language study to other academic disciplines.
- **Comparisons** enhance cultural and linguistic awareness through the analysis of similarities and differences between the target language and one's own.
- **Communities** emphasize the application of language skills in real-world contexts, fostering lifelong learning and active participation in global communities.

Collectively, these five goal areas facilitate language acquisition through the use of short films, providing learners with authentic, engaging, and culturally rich materials that support comprehensive language development, as will be explained below when explaining each stage proposed in the pedagogical sequence in Figure 1 (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015).

**Figure 1**

*Pedagogical Sequence Integrating ACTFL World-Readiness Standards*



Note. This diagram illustrates the integration of the five C's—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—within the pedagogical sequence.

### Stage 1: Choose the film

While language instruction typically begins with setting objectives, integrating short films allows for an alternative approach: selecting the film first and then formulating goals based on its content. Films, as dynamic and flexible authentic resources, can be adapted to any language proficiency levels and age groups. Educators might choose a film based on genre, topic, or cultural elements such as products, perspectives, and practices.

### Stage 2: Set goals

In world language education, a single short film can be used across different proficiency levels -novice, intermediate, advanced, superior, and distinguished- by tailoring tasks accordingly. Teachers should articulate what students *can do*. ACTFL provides can-do statements to identify

and establish objectives targeting both language (*communication*) and interculturality (*cultures*). Stating what learners can do with the language facilitates making *connections* across disciplines, topics, or fields, drawing *comparisons* between languages and cultures, and creating a sense of *community* using the target language. Additionally, referencing the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines offers a comprehensive description of language abilities in speaking, writing, listening, and reading within real-world, spontaneous, and non-rehearsed contexts.

### Stage 3: Apply a video task sequence

After establishing goals, it is time to design a sequence of video tasks, particularly focusing on Communication, Cultures, and Comparisons. Stage 3 follows a before, while, and after you watch sequence. Teachers make decisions if they want to address the three modes of Communication standards at each phase or if they only address one mode at each phase of the video task sequence. This decision should consider the lesson's duration and students' proficiency levels. The aim is to provide students with opportunities to engage in authentic communication across all modes. For instance, at the interpersonal level, students negotiate meaning and exchange information; at the interpretive level, they analyze cultural and linguistic elements; and at the presentational level, they produce messages based on their learning.

**Table 1**

*Before Watching Tasks by Communicative Mode*

Communicative Mode	Task (suggested by the authors)
Interpretive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Screenshots of the characters from the film are shown along a list of traits. Students predict traits.</li> <li>2. Keywords and images are provided; students predict the film's theme.</li> <li>3. Vocabulary practice: match words, definitions, and visuals.</li> <li>4. Listen to conversation excerpts; students predict what the film is about.</li> <li>5. Read transcripts, reviews, or film excerpts and answer questions.</li> <li>6. Students listen with no visuals; describe what the scene might depict.</li> <li>7. Listen to the soundtrack or music; guess the genre and topic.</li> <li>8. Read the title and watch the beginning and final scenes; predict the sequence of events. (Also possible using the title alone.)</li> <li>9. View pictures from film scenes and write dialogue bubbles.</li> </ol>
Interpersonal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "Sound off": view the beginning scene; students assume character roles and discuss current and future events.</li> <li>2. "Sound off" then create a voice-over for a scene.</li> <li>3. Describe a film image (e.g., cover art).</li> <li>4. Watch a scene; hypothesize what happens before and after.</li> <li>5. Create a conversation using still images from the film.</li> </ol>
Presentational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write a blog post explaining why viewers should watch a short film on the chosen theme</li> <li>2. Write a letter to a movie magazine's editor asking about the upcoming short film - what they would like to see.</li> <li>3. Using only the film's title, create a photo story predicting beginning, plot, and end.</li> </ol>

Cultures standards are more practical if addressed from the perspectives, practices and products views. ACTFL says that Perspectives refer to meaning, attitudes, values, and ideas; Practices refer to patterns of social interactions and Products to representations of the culture such as food, music, games, tools, etc. Communication involves cultures. Films become a bridge between the viewer and the target language and culture. Teachers should be meticulous about what content is necessary to develop a lesson since that content will frame the student's worldview and approach to perspectives, products, and practices. At the end, the lesson answers the question of "What do I expect to culturally accomplish by showing X or Y short film?"

Drawing upon the world-readiness standards for learning languages and to enrich the lesson planning experience, we have established different tasks for different modes. Tables 1, 2 and 3 present such tasks, structured around the Interpretive, Interpersonal, and Presentational modes of communication.

**Table 2**

*While Watching Tasks by Communicative Mode*

Communicative Mode	Task (suggested by the authors)
Interpretive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher shows pictures and narrations; students sequence visuals/text based on film—reinforces verbal tenses.</li> <li>2. Teacher pauses the film to ask comprehension questions.</li> <li>3. Teacher pauses the film for students to complete sentences based on what they saw.</li> <li>4. "Wildly waving" a paper/card with the heard or seen word/phrase.</li> <li>5. Create subtitles for a scene.</li> <li>6. Define words or explain statements based on film content.</li> <li>7. Read statements and judge them as true or false.</li> <li>8. Given statements, students identify which character likely said them.</li> <li>9. Stop the film and predict the ending.</li> </ol>
Interpersonal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher pauses at plot point; in pairs, students create a conversation about what happens next.</li> <li>2. Students take note of cultural encounters, behaviors, perspectives, practices, or expressions during social interactions.</li> <li>3. Learners create dialogues and record them as voice-overs or on-screen subtitles.</li> <li>4. Choose a character and narrate the story from that perspective.</li> <li>5. Stop the film and create the ensuing conversation.</li> <li>6. Compare the film situation to their own lives.</li> <li>7. Stop the film and discuss what they would have done differently and why.</li> </ol>
Presentational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students complete graphic organizers or mind maps about characters, plot, and setting.</li> <li>2. Choose a character and use visuals to narrate main storyline events.</li> <li>3. Create intertitles or scene transitions.</li> <li>4. Create a collage summarizing either the beginning or end of the short film.</li> </ol>



**Table 3***After Watching Tasks by Communicative Mode*

<b>Communicative Mode</b>	<b>Task (suggested by the authors)</b>
Interpretive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Answer open-ended and factual comprehension questions.</li> <li>2. Answer true/false or multiple-choice questions.</li> <li>3. Complete summaries by filling in the blanks.</li> <li>4. Sequence events in chronological order – use visuals and text.</li> <li>5. Read commentaries on the short film and express personal view points.</li> <li>6. Play a memory game matching characters to actions or statements.</li> <li>7. Play Trivia game based on film content.</li> </ol>
Interpersonal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assume roles as journalist/director: students create an interview with the director.</li> <li>2. Role-play favorite scenes.</li> <li>3. Ask and answer opinion questions about the film.</li> <li>4. Class debate on the film's theme or narrative flow.</li> <li>5. Character-based interviews or dialogues among characters.</li> <li>6. "Sound off": verbal reactions to film action.</li> <li>7. Use still images to create conversations.</li> <li>8. Give a speech comparing the film's situation to that of their home country, followed by Q&amp;A.</li> <li>9. Discuss the moral of the story.</li> <li>10. Create a trailer with accompanying spoken narrative.</li> </ol>
Presentational	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research cultural topics from the film; create visual comparing them to personal culture. (e.g. posters, infographics, graphs, map minds, and flyers)</li> <li>2. Explore the film's theme; produce blogs or webpage content.</li> <li>3. Retell or summarize the story in written or spoken formats.</li> <li>4. Rewrite or react creatively to the short film.</li> <li>5. Create a different ending.</li> <li>6. Present a short-film review or commentary.</li> <li>7. Design a poster highlighting teachings, morals, or memorable quotes.</li> <li>8. Create a short film on the same theme.</li> <li>9. Record a character-based podcast narration.</li> <li>10. Organize a school film festival. Same topic different films</li> <li>11. Create a photo story narrating the beginning, plot, and end.</li> <li>12. Write/Deliver a monologue or TED-style talk on any film topic.</li> <li>13. Compare the short film with a literary text or another film; present a comparison contrast chart.</li> </ol>

**Stage 4: Respond to the short film**

Incorporating Community and Connections standards, students create a product that reflects the intercultural aspect presented in the film. Students select topics or cultural elements to focus on, ensuring their responses are authentic. By understanding both their own culture and the

one depicted in the film, students can engage more meaningfully with their communities. Activities might include service projects, virtual or physical trips, or participation in cultural events. Technology can facilitate these responses, such as virtual tours or digital creations. Responding to the film allows learners to see the relevance of language and culture in real-life contexts. For example, according to ACTFL standards, at the novice writing level, a student communicates written information on familiar topics using rehearsed words and phrases. After watching a film about animal abuse, like "*Kitbull*," students might create a flyer on pet care or compile a list of local animal protection organizations, thereby connecting the film's content to community resources. Integrating health topics, students could design a brochure on administering first aid to injured animals, demonstrating interdisciplinary learning and career readiness.

Responding to the film shows students how the language they are learning can be truly used. It means that a connection happens when the students can relate the film content to any discipline, current issue, or information on their own culture.

### **Stage 5: Assess**

Various strategies exist to assess student performance and the development of the pedagogical sequence. The Comparisons standard fosters intercultural communicative competence, enabling students to analyze and contrast the target culture with their own. Reflective tasks can prompt students to revisit learning objectives and engage in comparative analyses. For instance, students might respond to questions such as:






- Do you recognize similar cultural elements in your own culture?
- What would you do in your own culture when facing a situation like the one presented in the film?
- Can you create a visual representation comparing and contrasting specific aspects shown in the short film?
- What new language elements did you learn, and what stereotypes were presented?

Such comparative analyses can be conducted at various proficiency levels; students can extend their knowledge by researching specific aspects discussed in the film.

In this final stage of the pedagogical sequence, educators assess the attainment of ACTFL's five goal areas. A verification checklist can be employed to determine whether students have developed competencies aligned with the World-Readiness Standards throughout the sequence. Teachers may utilize the checklist in Table 4, rating each indicator accordingly.

Teachers can also engage in the reflective task by asking open questions at different thinking skills. Table 5 presents a list of questions teachers can use to wrap up a short film lesson while assessing understanding and goals. In Bloom's taxonomy, they go from knowledge to creation.

**Table 4***World Readiness Standards Short Film Verification Checklist*

Goal area	Indicator	Rating
Communication	The students achieve the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational task (s).	
Cultures	The students reflect and explain the short film regarding their own cultural practices and perspectives investigate and explain	
Connections	The students make connections to other areas, topics, and fields while developing high-order thinking skills.	
Comparisons	The students investigate and identify similarities and differences in language use and cultural encounters.	
Communities	The students use and apply the language for enjoyment and put it into practice in their context and beyond.	

**Table 5***Sample Short Film Questions by Bloom's Cognitive Level*

Cognitive Level	Sample Questions
Knowledge	Can you list at least 10 new vocabulary words?
Remembering	Where did the events happen?
Examining	What behaviors are culturally accepted?
Understanding	How will you state in your own words the moral of the short film?
Comprehending	What happened at the end of the story?
Describing	Can you describe the characters in the short film?
Applying	How would you change the end of the short film?
Analyzing	What conclusions can you draw from the film?
Summarizing	How can you retell the story?
Predicting	What does the title of the short film mean? What is going to happen?
Creating	Can you create a short film review?

Note. All assessment tools presented in Stage 5 may be used to evaluate language development or short film implementation.

### An Example of a Spanish Lesson

One of the big advantages of using short films is that students can watch an entire film within a single class period, facilitating comprehensive lesson planning. Educators can employ multiple viewings of a short film, each with a distinct focus. For instance, the first viewing might concentrate on character descriptions, the second on plot identification, and the third on story retelling. An alternative instructional strategy involves implementing station rotations. This approach can be carried out in two ways:

1. **Thematic Stations:** Different stations present various short films centered around a common theme.
2. **Task-Oriented Stations:** A single short film is explored through diverse tasks at each station, targeting interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication modes.

The lesson plan template in Appendix D exemplifies a 90-minute class session incorporating the aforementioned strategies and assessment tools. The selected topic aligns with standards that promote communication, utilizing tasks suggested in Tables 1 to 3. The lesson plan in Appendix D adheres to a before-watching, while-watching, and after-watching sequence. To accommodate institutional requirements, traditional lesson components such as warm-up activities, guided practice, and independent practice are integrated and correspond with the viewing phases. This template is adaptable for use with any short film in any language.

### **Conclusions**

Authentic materials such as short films are a rich resource for foreign language learning, offering significant pedagogical potential. Short films can be exploited through different performance tasks aligned with the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards and Can-Do statements, facilitating the development of communication skills, cultural understanding, and interdisciplinary connections. Short films can be implemented in a class period providing learners with increased language exposure, enhancing thinking skills, addressing cultural practices, perspectives and products, and engaging through creative tasks.

The proposed five-step pedagogical sequence—choose a film, set goals, apply tasks, respond to film, and assess—along its before, while and after you – watch tasks provide a structured approach to incorporating short films into language instruction. This sequence supports the development of interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication skills while fostering cultural understanding through the exploration of products, practices, and perspectives. Moreover, it encourages connections to other disciplines and communities, promoting interdisciplinary learning and real-world application of language skills. In consequence, by implementing the pedagogical sequence and communicative tasks proposed in this article, students acquire not only the language but all the 5C's.

Educators are encouraged to utilize short films as dynamic tools to enhance student engagement, motivation, and intercultural competence. By thoughtfully selecting films and designing aligned instructional activities, teachers can create meaningful learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom, preparing students to navigate and appreciate diverse cultural contexts.

By implementing this pedagogical sequence and associated communicative tasks, educators can facilitate comprehensive language acquisition encompassing the five goal areas—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities—outlined in the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards. Short films, available in diverse formats and themes, introduce variety into the classroom and, with the aid of technological advancements, can be seamlessly integrated into any foreign language curriculum. To ensure the effectiveness of these tasks, educators should incorporate scaffolding strategies, activate learners' prior knowledge, provide appropriate linguistic input, and foster cultural understanding, as supported by existing literature and demonstrated within the pedagogical sequence and before, while and after you-watch tasks.

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**Appendix A****Table 6***List of Commonly Suggested Short Films***Short films (Spanish and English Titles)**

- 
- 7.35 de la Mañana
  - Todo exterior
  - Viaje a marte
  - Abuelo grillo
  - Día de los Muertos
  - Ana y Manuel
  - La increíble historia del hombre sin sombra
  - Alma
  - Cuánto: Más allá del dinero
  - El empleo
  - Jerminacion
  - La ventana abierta
  - La luna
  - Anonimos
  - Diez Minutos
  - Vale
  - Snack attack
  - The Present
  - Alike
  - Small Shoemakers
  - Changing Batteries
  - Cuerdas
-

## Appendix B

Table 7

*Websites Offering Spanish Short Films (Cortometrajes en Español)*

Website	Description
<i>ConvoSpanish</i> ( <a href="https://convospanish.com/spanish-short-films/">https://convospanish.com/spanish-short-films/</a> )	List of 10 short films from Spain
<i>Spanish4Teacher</i> Pinterest ( <a href="https://www.pinterest.com/Spanish4Teacher/cortometrajes-para-la-clase-de-espanol-shorts-in-s/">https://www.pinterest.com/Spanish4Teacher/cortometrajes-para-la-clase-de-espanol-shorts-in-s/</a> )	Nearly 100 films for Spanish class; curated by Spanish4Teacher.
<i>Carmen Herrero &amp; FILTA</i> Pinterest ( <a href="https://www.pinterest.co.uk/CarmenFILTA/shorts/">https://www.pinterest.co.uk/CarmenFILTA/shorts/</a> )	Over 100 shorts for Spanish class; curated by Carmen Herrero (2023) & Film in Language Teaching Association.
<i>Veo en Español</i> ( <a href="https://aee.educacionyfp.gob.es/recursos/plataformas/veo.html">https://aee.educacionyfp.gob.es/recursos/plataformas/veo.html</a> )	Platform by Spain's Ministry of Education; catalog of short films with teaching guides.
<i>TodoELE</i> ( <a href="https://www.todoele.net/contenido-cultural/cortometrajes">https://www.todoele.net/contenido-cultural/cortometrajes</a> )	60+ films organized by topic, genre, and proficiency level, including teaching guides.
<i>MarcoELE</i> ( <a href="https://marcoele.com/actividades/peliculas/">https://marcoele.com/actividades/peliculas/</a> )	Films sorted by topic, genre, and level; include grammar-focused teacher/student guides.
<i>University of Albany LibGuide</i> ( <a href="https://libguides.library.albany.edu/c.php?g=536813&amp;p=3674917">https://libguides.library.albany.edu/c.php?g=536813&amp;p=3674917</a> )	Guide with Latin American and Spanish videos freely available online.
<i>ELE Playlist 1</i> (YouTube) ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsrYaExktN4O4keQVzhwBgmOb-2Ewx2BN">https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsrYaExktN4O4keQVzhwBgmOb-2Ewx2BN</a> )	Collection of 32 Spanish-class short films.
<i>ELE Playlist 2</i> (YouTube) ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8Mir_hCZFgNo3CxfCi5V5KRhGUqBU5_O">https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8Mir_hCZFgNo3CxfCi5V5KRhGUqBU5_O</a> )	Collection of 31 Spanish-class short films.
<i>Cine ELE</i> ( <a href="https://cineele.com/">https://cineele.com/</a> )	Short films for Spanish class with teaching guides and activities.
<i>RutaELE</i> ( <a href="https://rutaele.es/videos/">https://rutaele.es/videos/</a> )	Short films for Spanish class, each with in-class activities and guides.



<i>TIC ELE</i> ( <a href="https://www.ticele.es/">https://www.ticele.es/</a> )	Blog with multimedia (audio/videos) for Spanish class; ~95 videos with guides.
<i>Concede Cine</i> ( <a href="https://concedecine.blogspot.com/search/label/cortometraje">https://concedecine.blogspot.com/search/label/cortometraje</a> )	Blog with short-film reviews.
<i>Educación 3.0</i> ( <a href="https://www.educaciontrespuntocero.com/recursos/cortometrajes-educar-en-valores/">https://www.educaciontrespuntocero.com/recursos/cortometrajes-educar-en-valores/</a> )	85 short films to teach values or socio emotional learning
<i>FilmEducation.org</i> ( <a href="https://www.filmeducation.org/">https://www.filmeducation.org/</a> )	Film-education site covering all type of films from multiple countries.
<i>Retina Latina</i> ( <a href="https://www.retinalatina.org/">https://www.retinalatina.org/</a> )	Latin American movies
<i>RTVE Play Cine</i> ( <a href="https://www.rtve.es/play/cine/">https://www.rtve.es/play/cine/</a> )	Spanish short films on RTVE's film platform.
<i>Cine.ar</i> ( <a href="http://www.cine.ar">http://www.cine.ar</a> )	Argentine short films.
<i>CineChile</i> ( <a href="https://cinechile.cl">https://cinechile.cl</a> )	Chilean short films.
<i>Cortos de Metraje</i> ( <a href="https://cortosdemetraje.com/idioma/espanol/">https://cortosdemetraje.com/idioma/espanol/</a> )	Spanish-language short films.
<i>PBS LearningMedia (SCETV)</i> ( <a href="https://scetv.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/world-languages/spanish/?rank_by=recency">https://scetv.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/world-languages/spanish/?rank_by=recency</a> )	PBS lessons in Spanish with culture, grammar, pronunciation, plus lesson plans.
<i>Kieran Donaghy blog</i> ( <a href="https://kierandonaghy.com/seven-best-silent-short-films-language-teaching/">https://kierandonaghy.com/seven-best-silent-short-films-language-teaching/</a> )	Recommendations of silent short films for language teaching.

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Note. Some websites offer lesson plans, class activities, summaries, or film recommendations.

## **Appendix C**

### **List of general interest websites on films**

It includes search engines and open-access websites that offer an option to search for short films.

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/CarmenFILTA/shorts/>

<https://www.pixar.com>

<https://www.disneyanimation.com>

<https://www.dreamworks.com>

<https://www.studiohibli.com.au>

<https://www.youtube.com> search: Spanish short films, country-specific short films, animated short films, or silent short films.

<https://www.imdb.com>

<https://www.filta.org.uk/>

## Appendix D

Table 8

Lesson Plan: Short Film Activity (Aligned with ACTFL Standards)

**Standard(s):** *Follow ACTFL and write according to your needs.***Objective(s):** SWBAT:

Make objectives SMART and respond to standards

**Instructional Design****Description****Pacing  
(minutes)****Hook****Before watching****Predicting:**

Ask students to look at the movie poster and the name of the short film. Then ask them to answer these questions: What is the short film about? What do you think will happen?

5

**Presentation/  
Demonstration****Before watching**

Vocabulary matching game

Choose some vocabulary students will need. Have them match vocabulary words with images from the movie.

Introduce the topic of the short film by activating prior knowledge.

Use a concept map with the topic of the short film and then have students complete with ideas and knowledge about it.

15

**Guided Practice****While watching**

Show the first scene. Ask two True/False questions then have students identify the character(s) and provide a description. (Interpretive)

10 min

Show the short film. Have students answer comprehension questions. Make sure you use a variety of formats

True/False, Open questions, Multiple Choice. (Interpretive)

Length of  
film from  
2 to 15  
min**Independent  
Practice****After watching**

Students select one option:

**Story Book:** Organize visuals of the story (beginning, plot, end) and write sentences retelling it, including the moral.**Short Film Review:** Create a poster/infographic presenting an opinion and the moral.**Conversational practice:** In pairs, students choose between:– *Interview the Director:* Role-play a conversation between journalist and director.– *Be a Character:* Role-play dialogue as characters discussing their actions and impact.

40

**Closure**

Students share their products and close the session by reflecting on the question:

How similar or different is what you watched compared to your country or place of origin?

5

**Questions**

This lesson moves from lower levels of thinking to High order levels. The questions go from Remember to Create.

**List of Materials Needed for this Lesson:**

Selected short film  
 Scenes from short film  
 Short film poster  
 Concept map  
 Comprehension questions  
 Access to digital creators like Canva, Postermywall.

**Assessments:**

**Brief Description of Formal:** The storybook or short film review along the conversational practice will be a summative and formal assessment.

**Rubric for authentic assessment:****Table 9***Storybook Project Rubric*

Criteria	3	2	1
<i>Cover</i>	Title and illustration on cover clearly	Title and illustrations	Title and illustrations are
<i>Storybook includes:</i>	relate the story and introduction to pick up the...	clearly relate to the story.	poorly done or do not relate to the story.
• <i>Illustration</i>			
• <i>Author</i>			
• <i>Title</i>			
<i>Text</i>	The font and legibility of the text do not interfere with or disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader in any area of the work.	The font and legibility of the text interfere with but do not disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader.	The font and legibility of the text interfere with and disrupt the communication of ideas to the reader.
<i>Grammar and Spelling</i>	There are no grammar or spelling errors anywhere in the work.	One or two grammar or spelling errors occur in the work.	Three or more grammar or spelling errors occur in the work.
<i>Storybook includes: no grammar or spelling errors.</i>			

<i>Use of parts of speech</i>	Four different parts of speech are used in the work.	Three different parts of speech are used in the work.	Two parts of speech devices are used in/or work.
<i>Sentences have:</i>			
• <i>Nouns</i>			
• <i>Verbs</i>			
• <i>Adverbs</i>			
• <i>Adjectives</i>			
<i>The illustrations support the sentences</i>	The illustrations help present sentences throughout all areas and/or work.	The illustrations help present the sentences in a majority of areas throughout the work.	The illustrations help present the sentences in only a minority of areas throughout the work.
<i>The book includes: 10 sentences</i>			
<i>Use of time:</i>	The student was 100 - 90% of the time on task.	The student was 80 - 70% of the time on task.	The student was 60 - 50% of the time on task.
<i>Student was:</i>			
<i>% of</i>			
<i>time ON</i>			
<i>task</i>			

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**Brief Description of Informal:** while watching activities will be formative since it is to check understanding. Feedback and observation are formative too.

Note. This lesson plan follows the ACTFL standards and integrates interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes of communication. Pacing is approximate and may be adjusted based on class needs. Materials listed are suggested resources to support instruction.