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ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME, KEY ACTION 2
CAPACITY BUILDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Internationalisation and Virtual Exchange: Borderless between EU and Asian Countries
(HARMONY)**

DIGITAL STORYTELLING MANUAL

The HARMONY project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme for Capacity Building in Higher Education, aims to bring together students and academics from Europe and South Asia to enhance cultural understanding and exchange, and to support universities' internationalization at home. To facilitate this process and to make it even more meaningful, students from across the seven Asian universities involved in HARMONY will engage in digital storytelling thus developing their intercultural competence and sensitivity to cultural diversity. The multimodal opportunities of a digital medium can make an ordinary story even more powerful, leading to empathetic reactions in the audience that can enhance tolerance and support for students in the future. In addition, a series of digital storytelling contests will be organized in the project across the Asian universities involved to provide their students with an opportunity to showcase their intercultural experiences, either through enacting an imagined scenario or reflecting a real life experience. Sharing means caring and by sharing their digital stories, HARMONY students will not engage in self-reflection but will also, hopefully, help and inspire others on their intercultural learning journey.

1. Digital Storytelling: A How-to Guide

This handbook guides students on how to create a powerful digital narrative. Since the beginning of time, humans have used storytelling to make sense of the world and to give their lives a greater purpose. Since then, storytelling's ability to move people and develop a deeper sense of connection with others has not changed, but its techniques and delivery methods may have. Fiction writers follow the edict of "Show. Don't tell." In other words, a visual picture should speak louder than mere description. In a digital story, there is every opportunity to put this edict to good use. The following figure shows the structure of a good story and what the storyteller can do at each of the steps of writing:



While a story must have a structure (beginning, middle, end), the narrator may try different techniques of storytelling such as *in media res* (begin from the middle) or different narrative points of view (perhaps of the same incident). In fact, a good narrator should be able to tell an ordinary story in an extraordinary way. A good story, therefore, may be:

- **Thrilling:** Interesting stories keep the audience interested in what happens next.
- **Believable:** Strong narratives persuade readers/listeners to accept their version of reality and make it easier for them to connect.
- **Educational:** Interesting stories pique interest and broaden the audience's knowledge base.
- **Organized:** Good stories have a clear structure that makes it easier to deliver the main point and for readers/listeners to understand it.
- **Memorable:** Great stories leave an impression on the readers/listeners, whether via inspiration, controversy, or humor.

Key stages of a digital story crafting

1.1. Ideation and Planning

At this stage, the storyteller is expected to:

- Think of an idea that he/she feels passionate about and may be turned into a good story according to the above mentioned criteria.
- Focus on one aspect.
- Find a unique angle to the story and tell it like only he/she can.
- Think about the potential target audience. The aspect and angle of the idea should be selected appropriately.

- Make the story relatable to the audience (what is it that connects the shared experience with the audience?).

1.2. Materials and Equipment

At this stage, the storyteller to be is expected to:

- Decide what kind of an environment (background, indoor/outdoor, props, light, etc.) he/she needs for the story.
- Determine if he/she has the appropriate digital recording equipment (phone, microphone, camera, video recorder, etc.).
- Check if he/she has or can use editing software.

1.3. Preparing the Script

At this stage, the storyteller to be starts crafting the story by ensuring the following:

- Digital story length: **two to three minutes**
- Digital story language: there are no restrictions concerning the language used to tell the story. In case it is not English, subtitles in English for any dialogues and/or narrations are to be included in the video.
- Regardless of whether the story is real or imagined, the script is to be written as a story with a plot following the Freytag's pyramid structure below:

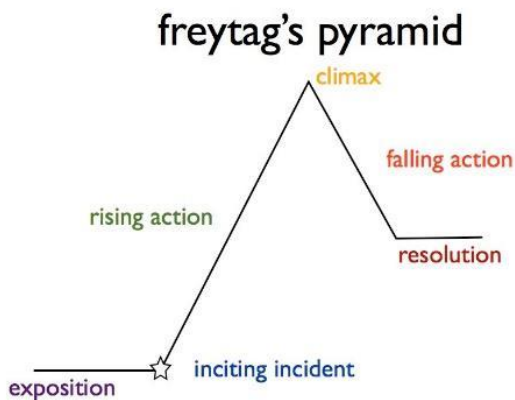


Fig. 2: Freytag's Pyramid [Source: <https://writers.com/freytags-pyramid>]

- Introduction of the people/characters of the story should followed by the escalation of the events, which include a conflict, to the point when a decision must be made (climax). The decision will determine how the conflict will be handled until a resolution is reached.
- Provision of a conclusion that reflects some learning from the experience.

1.4. Storyboarding

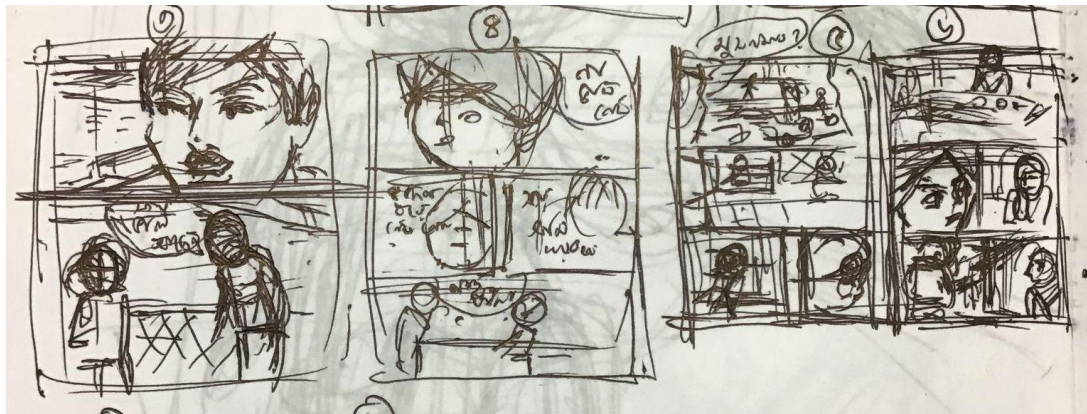
A storyboard is a visual representation of the shot-by-shot progression of a storytelling video. At this stage that represents an essential component in pre-visualizing the digital story, the storyteller is expected to prepare a storyboard for his/her digital story. This is a vital step required to complete the production in an organized manner. Storyboarding is also deemed to be the first visualization form of the story script.

The storyboard is a way to express one's ideas through thumbnails. The digital storyteller is expected to utilize digital content, animations, collected footage, and original content in creating his/her digital story. It should be the earliest reflection of the concept.

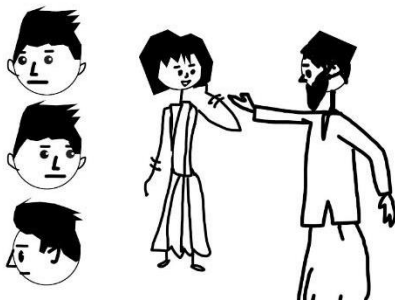
Key steps storyboard preparation:

1.4.1. Thumbnail

This is the beginning step of a storyboard and the very first visual that comes to the mind while imagining the story. Thumbnails are to be drawn on a blank page and no specific template is required. The storyteller has the freedom to visualize his/ her thoughts as showcased in the figure below:



It is not required to be very good at drawing to create the thumbnails. In storyboarding, one can use stick figures with minimal suggestions of the characters to make them recognizable as in the figure below:



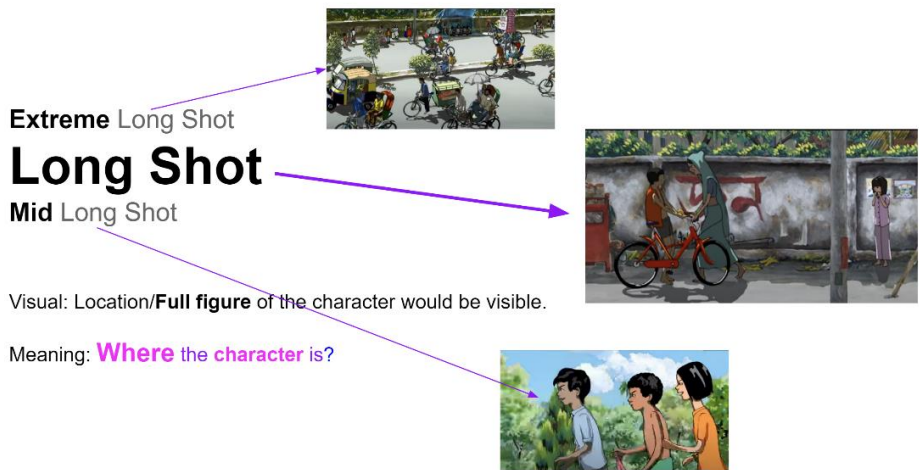
1.4.2. Shot Division and Arrangement:

In this step, the digital storyteller needs to decide how much of the story he/she wants to show in their frames. Being precise when showing the elements of the story is of key importance. For instance, it is not required to show the entire city if one wants to show the emotion of the character only and vice versa.

1.4.3. Shot Size (size of the characters and/or elements on the screen)

Long shot: The location/full figure of the character should be visible. It can be an extreme long shot, mid-long shot, or just a normal long shot.

Shot Division Shot size (size of your characters in the screen/shot)



Mid shot: From chest to head/waist to the leg of the character/or any part of the body of this size would be visible. It is mostly used for dialogue scenes, and for showing body language. A mid shot can be a mid-long shot, a mid close-up shot, or a normal mid shot.

Shot Division Shot size (size of your characters in the screen/shot)




Close-up shot: Only the head/any single part of the body is visible. It is mostly used to showcase the emotion present in the scene, and to show any specific detail. It is also used extensively for dialogue scenes as well. A close-up shot can be a mid close-up shot, an extreme close-up shot, or just a normal close-up shot.

Shot Division Shot size (size of your characters in the screen/shot)

Mid Close up Shot

Close Up Shot

Extreme Close up Shot

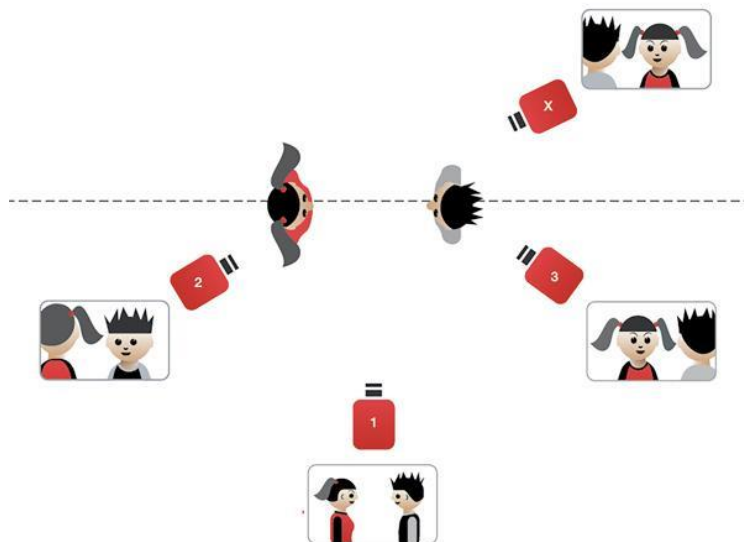


Visual: Only the **head**/or any part of the body of this size would be visible.

Meaning: Mostly use to show the **emotion**. Also to show anything **detail**, and for the dialogue scene as well.

Shot Arrangement

180 Degree Rule: This is a rule followed in order to maintain the character's place in the frame while moving the camera, and is used primarily in dialogue scenes. For example, if the digital story creator shows a girl on the left side in one shot, she has to be on the left side in the next shot as well. One only changes her position after inserting a shot where the two characters are absent.



The video in the following link showcases the many different shot sizes and how they are used in enhancing the visual narrative: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyML8xuKfoc>

1.5. Technical Execution Guidelines

When preparing his/her digital story, the creator is expected to take into account and implement the following technical requirements and guidelines:

- The quality of the short film should be full HD and above. It should not be less than 1080 p. It can be shot on any camera that supports this format.
- All the shots in a short film should preferably be stabilized using a tripod or gimbal etc. unless the story/ theme demands use of hand held or jerky shots for example in a thriller or horror genre.
- The aspect ratio and format of all the shots in a short film should be same unless it is deliberately stylized and aspect ratios are consciously changed.
- The short film must be original and no watermark of any kind should be on the film. Any editing software can be used to edit the film but whatever the software, the editing should look smooth and cuts should be well defined.
- Suggested editing software with no water mark are as follows: Final cut pro, Adobe premiere pro, Avid, I movie, Da Vinci Resolve, Sony Vegas etc.
- The video should be in MOV, or MP4 or AVI format only and codecs like H.264 or H.265 or .M4V are to be used so that the file size is small but the pic quality is good.
- The use of transitions & plugins is strongly recommended.
- The background score/ music should not overlap the original sound and it should be completely balanced. In other words, the final film should be properly mixed maintaining the legal volume levels.
- The use of software inbuilt background music or free music with no reference is recommended.
- The use of images, music, video, research, and ideas in the digital story should not violate any copyrights. Any type of content (images, music, video, research, and ideas) in the digital story that is not the result of the digital storyteller's own work should be duly and properly credited by providing clear references/ citations or evidence of specific prior permission to use.
- The digital storyteller bears full responsibility for any copyright claims and the content presented in the video, and is obliged to act in compliance with the applicable copyright legislation. Detailed information on the copyright related legislation in the European Union and on how to get approval for copyright could be found at the following links:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/625126/EPRS_STU\(2018\)625126_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/625126/EPRS_STU(2018)625126_EN.pdf)

<https://fairuse.stanford.edu/overview/introduction/getting-permission/>

2. HARMONY Digital Storytelling Contests

Objectives

- To identify the best digital stories crafted by students across campus and dedicated to matters related to intercultural awareness and engagement, cross-cultural dialogue, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and mutual understanding
- To select and nominate the best suited student participants (three per Asin University, 21 in total) in the Student Boot Camp to take place at Varna University of Management, Bulgaria in July 2023
- To stimulate students' intercultural engagement and creative thinking
- To foster campus diversity and to support internationalization at home
- To disseminated information about the HARMONY project and its results across campus and beyond incl. about the established FRIENDS Teahouses
- To promote the European Union's values of tolerance, inclusion, cultural diversity, multiculturalism.

HARMONY Digital Stories: Basic Requirements

Content

The digital stories crafted and submitted in the framework of the HARMONY project, should address issues and topics in the context of intercultural awareness and engagement, cross-cultural dialogue, cultural diversity, global skills, creativity, student engagement. The digital stories to be submitted should capture but are not limited to an international and/or intercultural experience or learning journey of the student participant at home or abroad that has made him/her reflect on the importance of tolerance, mutual understanding, cultural diversity, and inclusion. Digital stories could focus on a presentation, observation or reflection of any type of international and/ intercultural experience, encounter, picture, person, impression, thought that has made him/ her draw a lesson or engage in transformative learning.

Digital stories' content and audiovisuals could not include and/ or promote in any way illegal behavior; violence; nudity, profanity, vulgar behavior; racial, religious, sexual or other invidious prejudice; prejudice or harm against any group or individual; any type of discrimination or exploitation based on race, gender, religion, disability, age or any other basis protected by law; invasion of privacy of any person; offence to any person to injure his/her name and reputation; violation of rights established by law or agreement. Finally, the digital stories produced and submitted in the framework of the HARMONY project cannot include any advertisement or endorsement of products or services. [Source: <https://erasmusplusfriends.eu/digital-storytelling-manual/>]

Technical requirements

Each digital story should be of two to three minute-duration. It should be crafted following precisely the technical instructions provided above in 2.5. Technical Execution Guidelines. Digital stories told in and using a language other than English, should be submitted with inbuilt subtitles in English.

All digital stories to be produced in the framework of the HARMONY project's implementation and the organization and facilitation of the HARMONY Digital Storytelling Contests across the above mentioned seven partner universities in Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam should follow the Erasmus+ Programme's visualization rules thus including the following logos in each digital story:

Erasmus+ Programme logo



Co-funded by the
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HARMONY project logo



The Erasmus+ Programme's logo should always precede any other logo used in the digital story. Furthermore, the following disclaimer displayed as the footer in this document should be also included in each digital story:

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

All entries should be submitted in person through a flash drive at the seven FRIENDS Teahouses established in the HARMONY project. A release letter in which a template is available at the FRIENDS Teahouses must be filled out upon submission of the entry. This release letter provides consent for the University, its FRIENDS Teahouse and the HARMONY consortium to use and disseminate the video to a broader audience for the exploitation of the internationalisation objectives in line with the Erasmus+ HARMONY project's mandate.

Assessment criteria and selection procedure

The assessment of the submitted digital stories and the selection of the winners (three per University) to take part in the Student Boot Camp to be hosted by Varna University of Management, Bulgaria in summer 2023 will be conducted by the staff members of the FRIENDS Teahouses established across the seven Asian universities involved in the HARMONY project and under the supervision of the HARMONY project's institutional coordinators. Each Asian university involved undertakes to appoint a Selection Committee. The latter should include experts in the fields of intercultural engagement and international cooperation, and in media and communications. Assessment processes and selection procedures should be impartial, fair, objective and transparent. Finally, it is each Asian university's responsibility to ensure that none of their appointed Selection Committee members is involved in any sort of conflict of interest.

The following assessment criteria will apply:

Assessment criteria	Max. points
Creativity and originality of the digital story	30
Relevance and coherence of the digital story content to the HARMONY project's objectives, spirit and values	30
Technical execution and cinematography	20
Digital story's impact and emotional engagement	20
Total:	100

Each of the seven Asian universities involved agrees to nominate for participation in the Student Boot Camp to take place at Varna University of Management, Bulgaria in 2023 the three student winners with the highest rated digital stories at institutional level who also meet all other above mentioned requirements and pre-conditions.

