



Facilitator Module 5 Introduction to Narration

Materials

- Power Point: Introduction to Narration
- Sample Advocacy video with narration for exercises

Preparations

Prepare flipchart, notes or projected presentation for this session.
Cue selected videos and ensure volume of video can be muted easily.

Time 30-50 minutes

Description

This is a continuation from previous Session on ‘Presentation and Brainstorm-Voice and Point of View’. This Session introduces narration and helps participants determine if narration is right for their video and campaign.

Instructions

Part A (10 minutes) Presentation

Narration is when a named or anonymous narrator guides the story being told through the advocacy video.

- Begin your presentation introducing narration to the participants. (See **Facilitators’ Presentation Notes**)
- Screen short example of effective narration in an advocacy video.

FACILITATORS’ TIPS:

Often the best examples of narration aren’t from human rights videos: consider using a nature documentary to provide an example.

Part B (20-40 minutes depending on group size)

Practical Exercise

1. Divide participants into small groups of 3-4 people
2. Get each group to identify a volunteer who will be their ‘narrator’
3. Select a short video with narration (consider showing a subsequent scene from the example video shown in Part A)
4. Provide participants with the objective of the advocacy video, audience and background on the issue
5. Play a selected scene with the sound muted. Each group will have five minutes to develop a narration for that scene.
6. Play the scene a second time and ask each team’s ‘narrator’ to narrate the video
7. The facilitator should provide feedback to the narration examples reflecting clarity in conveying message and context
8. At the end of the exercise, play the scene with audio so that participants can hear the actual narration





Additional Practice Exercise for Narration

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Tell them to select a volunteer to be the 'narrator' for the group.
3. Explain the participants' instructions.
4. Nominate one member of your small group to be narrator and one member to carry out some small activities. While the 'actor' is role-playing an activity, the narrator will simultaneously narrate the actions where they think it is necessary/appropriate.
5. While the role-play and narration is taking place the rest of the group members must take notes on whether the narration is:
 6. Describing the appropriate actions/moments to explain the activity clearly
 7. Simple and free of unnecessary information
 8. Speaking from a different point of view other than their own and with a particular audience in mind.
9. Remaining in your small groups, review your comments with the narrator and actor.
10. While each small group is practicing this exercise, you (and your co-facilitator) will go around to ensure that the groups are on the right track.
11. Once the exercise is underway, challenge the participants further by asking the narrators to speak from a different point of view than their own, or describe the tasks with a particular audience in mind.
12. Debrief the results of this practice work with the participants.
13. Move to the next exercise once this one is complete.

FACILITATORS' PRESENTATION NOTES:

Part A (Presentation)

Why narration: Re-emphasize that narration is not just describing what is happening on screen. You are complementing the pictures, and you are also adding information and context that you cannot easily or speedily convey via interviews or visual sequences (particularly important in situations of limited access to interviewees or where your advocacy video has to be short).

Narration is one key decision you have to make when determining the point of view the film will take. If you decide to use narration, there are a few key questions you should ask yourself:

- Who will be the narrator?
- What tone will the narration take to get your message across?
- A man or a woman? A young or old person? A person with a regional accent or a standardized accent?
- Do they sound academic or like an average person?
- Is the tone critical or upbeat?
- All of these are factors that will have implications for how your audience responds to the film.

An important practical consideration:

You can decide before you start shooting if you want to have a voiceover. A voiceover can guide the viewer through the story and provide information that you were unable to shoot. If you decide not to have a voiceover, make sure you have all the information in the interviews that cover all the issues you want to talk about. Remember however, that narration has to come over pictures: so if you plan to include extensive narration you will need plenty of visual sequences and b-roll to go 'under' the narration.





The following are a variety of tips that you can use when writing narration:

- Plan what you want to say. Once the objective for change and audience for the video are clear, then the narration and the rest of the script will also be much clearer.
- Don't describe what is in the picture – this will be obvious to the viewer.
- However, do ensure that the narration fits the pictures—think of the B-roll you have and how it is going to be used.
- Don't overuse narration. Interview dialogue is preferable to narration.
- Remember that narration has to be covered with B-roll pictures. Often we do not have a lot of appropriate B-roll, and viewers quickly become bored if pictures are dull or relatively unrelated to the narration.
- Make your writing as clear as your talking. Describe succinctly what you are trying to say to someone else—you will probably be clearer, and use language more appropriate to narration.
- Revise as necessary and take advice from others—but remember not to lose the freshness.
- Make every word count and also ensure the meaning is clear.
- Avoid too many acronyms.
- Use short words and sentences and cut out the unnecessary—adjectives that describe what is in the picture, phrases that state the obvious or have no inherent meaning (“let’s face it”), words that weaken their neighbors (“perhaps, about, maybe”) and jargon or clichés.
- Replace ‘which’ and ‘that’ with a dash where appropriate, e.g. ‘Ocaranza hospital, which was the scene of the worst abuses, was where the first action was taken’ could be understood equally well as ‘Ocaranza hospital—scene of the worst abuses—was where the first action was taken.’
- Make your sentences active. Consider this alternative: The first action happened at the scene of the worst abuses: Ocaranza Hospital.
- Remember you have the option of titles—instead of saying the name of a location on the narration, why not use a subtitle, e.g. a title, Ocaranza Psychiatric Facility, Mexico.
- Read your narration out loud. Is it clear? Do you trip over words? Is there intrusive alliteration? Is a word repeated too many times? Think about who will be reading the narration—how will it sound with their accent?
- Look through your narration before you give it to the person who will read it. Are there difficult pronunciations of names and places, or technical terms that you should sound out for them before they begin? If they are not a professional voiceover artist or used to recording narration, are there passages that require a special emphasis or pacing?