

EL-Civics on the Border Project and Activity Description Video: Socorro News

Students produce a local newscast including news stories, weather, sports, commercials, and public service announcements.

Teacher: Eduardo Honold

Level: Intermediate and High ESL

Learning objectives:

- Practice English skills in the context of mass communication
- Learn interview techniques
- Use commercials and public service announcements to communicate for a purpose

Materials:

- Taped local news cast from El Paso TV stations
- Video camera, computer, video-editing software, microphone
- Storyboard templates

Products created by the students:

- 10 minute video including newscast and commercials

Time required: 12 hours (6 class sessions)

Steps:

- **Pre-activities:** Students watch and analyze the local news to learn about the sequence, style, and language of a newscast. Students also watch commercials and discuss different strategies for conveying persuasive messages in a 30 second format.
- **Activities:** Students begin to plan newscast by brainstorming news stories and commercials. As a group, they decide what stories and commercials will be produced and divide up tasks. Reporters write questions for interviews and do some background research for the stories. Other teams of students work on storyboarding the commercials. Students then go out in the field to conduct interviews and obtain footage for their reports. Commercials are shot closely following the storyboards. Once the main stories and commercials have been edited, a "set" for the anchor is constructed using a desk and colored background. All of the anchor lead ins and transitions are written, practiced, and are taped. After the anchor segments have been edited with the stories and commercials, students can add voiceovers, music, titles, and graphics where appropriate.
- **Post-activities:** Students presented this newscast at a student showcase.

What worked? My students were completely absorbed by this project. Because they had seen and studied the model of a real newscast, they were very excited to do their own stories in a very professional manner. They paid great attention to the language used in broadcasts, and had a chance to practice English through repeated tapings of their reports or news segments. The reports also provided students to interview members of the community, and to identify the most important and interesting aspects of a story. The commercials and public service announcements gave students an opportunity to practice their storytelling skills and to use persuasive and expressive language for a specific purpose. Above all, this was a fun and high-energy project that led to a spectacular result that students were very proud of.

Tips and suggestions:

- Make sure that students undertake a reasonable number of stories to cover in the newscast. For a class of 15 students, 2 news stories, a sports, and weather segment allowed them to finish the project in less than 3 weeks.
- Review basic video techniques such as lighting, appropriate distance, and camera movement in order to maximize usable footage.
- Adding much of the report as a voiceover rather than a report from the field allows students to have more control over what they say and reduces problems with sound quality.
- It is easier to tape all of the anchor segments at once rather than over a couple of class sessions in order to avoid continuity problems (different clothing, hairstyles, etc.)

Materials documenting the project:

- Socorro News video