Audiovisuals in the field
Céline Ferlita, 7 September 2020
Translated by Lameen Souag

1. Summary:
1. Constraints in the field
2. How to choose your video recording equipment
3. How to choose your audio recording equipment
4. Audiovisual language
5. Some advice…

1. Constraints in the field
Filming conditions:
- Lack of time
- Speaker refusal
- Weather conditions

1. Constraints in the field
Technical conditions:
- Access to electricity
- Forgetting your equipment
- Breaking your equipment
2. Choosing your video recording equipment

**2A Mobile phone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable</td>
<td>Small accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to set up</td>
<td>Limited audio/video capabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price: 500-800 euros</td>
<td>Limited memory and battery life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>To be used occasionally</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2B Camera (hybrid, reflex)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>No headphone jack (depending on the model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable</td>
<td>No microphone jack (depending on the model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price: 700-2000 euros</td>
<td>Recorded sound needs synchronization (depending on the model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good-quality video</td>
<td>Needs tripod, other accessories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2C Handheld videocamera**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Small memory cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable</td>
<td>No microphone jack (depending on the model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price: 600-1200 euros</td>
<td>Recorded sound needs synchronization (depending on the model)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good-quality video</td>
<td>Needs a tripod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2D (Semi)professional camera**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very good quality video and sound</td>
<td>Price: 1500-5000 euros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portable</td>
<td>Portable, but heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video synchronised with sound</td>
<td>Needs a tripod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price: 1500-5000 euros</td>
<td>Small memory cards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 What are the right questions to ask yourself?

*Questions about your project:*
- What is my field site? What are the conditions there like?
- Should I focus on video or sound? Or both?
- Do I have time to film?
- Do you have an added-value project along with your documentation?

*Technical questions:*
- What is my budget?
- What format is the video recorded in? (FULL HD, 4K etc.)
- Is there a mic jack (mini jack or XLR)?
- Is there a headphone jack?
- Can a mic be added? (e.g.: hot shoe)
3 Choosing your audio recording equipment

3A Microphones
Accessories
- Tripod or base
- Wind muff
- Consumables (batteries, rechargeable or disposable) and chargers
- Protective cover

3B Audio recorders
These days, recorders are very effective:

Functioning:
- Power source: Battery (rechargeable or disposable), mains
- Memory cards for recording

Microphones: Possibility of multitrack
- Internal microphone
- External microphone (XLR jack)

- Check the recording rate: 16 bits / 48 kHz / .wav
- Possibility of changing the playback and recording volumes

3B Synchronising sound and video
For this, you will need to do a CLAP. That means making a visual and audio signal in front of the two recorders.
1. Set up the apparatus: speaker, videocamera, audio recorders
2. Once everything is ready, shout in a loud voice: “Action!”
3. Get both devices recording and make sure they are recording PROPERLY
4. Make a clear announcement (e.g. “date”, “recording with Mr. and Mrs. T, first take”)
5. Clap both hands flat against each other in a brief, ringing back and forth movement
6. Wait for the person who clapped to leave the scene
7. If forgotten, clap at the end
4 Audiovisual language

4B The shot: the basic unit
A shot is an uninterrupted video recording (no Rec/Stop). The length of a shot will depend on the storage capacity of the recording device.

A shot is defined by a field delineating the limits of the image, or the situation. It concentrates the attention.

A shot can have different sizes: from a close-up to a wide shot.
- Extreme close-up (Très gros plan)
- Close-up (Gros plan)
- Tight shot (Plan rapproché)
- American shot (Plan américain)
- Italian shot (Plan italien)
- Full shot (Plan moyen)
- Long shot (Plan d’ensemble)

4D Filming with a tripod
Filming with a tripod is the ideal situation. This will prevent shaking as well as fatigue from carrying the videocamera filming.

What height should I put the videocamera at?
- At the level of the speaker’s gaze, at the height of a person, facing the subject
- Use the spirit level / “bubble” (so the horizon is straight)
- Don’t place the camera relative to yourself, but rather relative to the subject being filmed

4D Filming with a tripod

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>High-angle</th>
<th>Eye-level</th>
<th>Photographer</th>
<th>Low-angle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

WARNING: Avoid high- or low-angle shots (UP/DOWN or DOWN/UP)

4D Filming without a tripod
This is not ideal, but sometimes we have no choice.
- Stand firm
- Put the camera-strap around your neck to balance the weight
- Use both hands to counterweight each other
- Try to find a support: a wall, a tree, a post, a table…
- Hold the camera along the body
4C Take light into account
Cameras are bad at handling low light levels.
- One has to adjust for the ambient light and try to get close to the lens
- White reflective surfaces can “light up” a face
- One can increase the ambient light, by turning on the lights or adding booster lights that you bring along

**Warning**: The subject should not be filmed:
- with the light behind them, which leads to **backlighting**
- with the light in their face, which may bother them

2E How do you make good shots?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common problems</th>
<th>Good habits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shots too short between moving</td>
<td>Leave a few seconds before and after the person being filmed speaks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability problems</td>
<td>Use a camera tripod, or surrounding materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic misuse of the zoom</td>
<td>Resolve to do only fixed shots, and train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position relative to the subject</td>
<td>Consider what is is important in each shot, and how far away to place oneself for filming it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera set to automatic, or poor understanding of the settings</td>
<td>Train yourself to use the camera – learn the settings, the menus, and the ergonomics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Some advice
Before going off to film, check in advance:
- the batteries are charged
- how much consumables you have (batteries, memory cards, tapes…)
- tripod compatibility with the camera
- connectors and cables
- recording time available on the device
- the need for a rain cover
- for an audio recorder, same recommendations
- cigarette paper or glasses cleaning cloth to clean the lens with
- road map (what am I going to film? whom? where?…)

5 Some advice
When you get back from filming:
- recharge empty batteries
- move the contents of memory cards onto your computer / format them
- make sure the tripod mount is back on its original tripod
- do not leave batteries inside the apparatus

See you on Monday 7 September at 4:35 PM to answer your questions
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(01 49 58 37 09) celine.ferlita@cnrs.fr

Translator’s note: For help translating filming terminology across European languages including French and English, try https://www.lecinedico.com/.