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## **UNIT 5 UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE SHOTS AND CAMERA MOVEMENTS\***

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### **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After reading this Unit, you'll be able to:

- Understand the different types of shots used in film and video production;
- Describe the various camera movements;
- Explain the purposes of different types of shots and camera movements;
- Select the suitable shot or camera movement for your film or video production.

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### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Film is an audiovisual product which generally consists of two elements: audio and visual. A film communicates its message mainly through visuals, supported by the audio component. If you want to make a film you must have understanding of visual language. Visual language has its own grammar, and shots and camera movements are its important elements. In this Unit, we'll discuss the different types of shots and camera movements used in filmmaking. Once you'll understand the basics of visual language, you can use it in different audiovisual productions including ethnographic films. For example, if you know the English language, you can use this language for writing different things like stories, news reports, books, articles, novels, etc. The style of language may be different in story writing, news writing or book writing, but basics and grammar of the language will remain same. The same logic is also applicable to visual language.

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## 5.2 SHOT

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Just like written language, visual language (language of film) has also different units. You can equate letters with frames, words with shots, sentences with scenes, paragraphs with sequences and the whole story with the complete film. Though letter is the smallest unit of written language, it lacks meaning. Collection of letters form a word which carries some meaning. So, we can say that word is the smallest meaningful unit of the written language. Similarly, shot is the smallest meaningful unit of the visual language. It is a collection of frames. Basically, frame is a still image recorded by the camera and a number of frames together form a shot. As you know that by playing a number of sequential still images at a certain speed, the experience of movement can be created, and the film works on the same concept.

In filmmaking or video production, you can define shot as the recording or footage without any break. Shot is a single unbroken footage or recording. You can also say that shot is a footage or recording from one cut to another cut. The duration of a shot may be a few seconds or up to several minutes. If you see any film cautiously you can easily identify different shots.

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## 5.3 TYPES OF SHOTS AND THEIR USES

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As we discussed, shot is a very important element of visual language through which you can narrate your story in a film. Every type of shot has its own purpose and usefulness. You can make your viewers more connected to your film by using suitable shots. Wrong selection of shots can create disturbance in smooth storytelling and cause distraction of the viewers.

Shots can be classified on the basis of different criteria. A few important classifications are given below:

- i) Shots classified by the movement of camera
- ii) Shots classified by the subject's size in the frame
- iii) Shots classified by camera angle
- iv) Other types of shots

### 5.3.1 Shots classified by the movement of camera

You can classify the shots into two following broad categories on the basis of the movement of camera:

- i) Static shot
  - ii) Dynamic shot
- i) **Static shot:** If you don't move camera during recording of a shot, it'll be called a static shot. In static shots, camera doesn't move, only the characters can move.
  - ii) **Dynamic shot:** Dynamic shots are taken by the moving camera. If you move your camera during the recording of a shot, it will be classified as dynamic shot. For example, two persons are talking to each other angrily in your shot, then camera moves to left for showing the presence of few other

people. It will be counted as a dynamic shot. We will discuss the different types of camera movements in the later part of this unit.

### 5.3.2 Shots classified by the subject's size in the frame

Shots can be classified by size of the subject captured in the frame. Here, you need to know about the two terms: 'subject' and 'frame'.

**Subject:** A subject may be the character or any object which is the center of interest for the camera. In other words, subject is the character or object which will be in focus during recording. More than one character or object may also be treated as subjects.

**Frame:** A frame is a still image and the smallest unit of any film or video. As we discussed earlier, a number of frames together make a shot. In this context, frame is the space of that still image available to a director or cinematographer to compose a shot. You can also say that frame is an area which is captured by a camera and visible to the audience. Anything which is out of frame during shooting is not the part of film because it is not captured by the camera.

On the basis of subject's size captured in the frame, shots can be divided into three basic types:

- 1) Close-up
- 2) Medium shot
- 3) Long shot.

These three basic shots can further be divided into few other types. On the basis of subject's size, you can classify shots into seven following types:

- 1) Extreme close-up (ECU)
- 2) Close-up (CU)
- 3) Medium close-up (MCU)
- 4) Medium shot (MS)
- 5) Medium long shot (MLS)
- 6) Long shot (LS)
- 7) Extreme long shot (ELS)

All these above-mentioned shots can be framed by changing the distance between camera and the subject. While framing a shot, you can capture anything according to the need of your story. It may be human beings, animals, plants, non-living objects, etc. Here we'll use a female character as an example to explain the different types of shots and their purposes. But before starting the discussion on different types of shots, you should be aware of one rule. A shot should never be cut at the natural divisions of our body like neck, waist and knees. You should always cut your shots from just above or below these natural divisions.

- 1) **Extreme close-up (ECU):** It is closer than the close-up shot and captures a part of face. It is abbreviated as ECU. Extreme close-up shot is used to show the important details of a smaller area. You can use this shot to reveal some important marks on your character's face or some important and

meaningful activities of your character's eyes, lips etc. It helps to show detailed facial expressions and emotions. For example an extreme close-up could be of a character's tearful eyes. It helps the director reveal the character's emotion beautifully. Extreme close-ups of shining teeth are commonly used in the advertisement films of different dental products. Figure 1.1 is an example of extreme close-up shot.



*Figure 1.1 : Extreme close-up shot*

- 2) **Close-up (CU):** It captures the whole face. The whole frame is mainly covered with the face only, so negligible background information is available. Close-up shots are used to show the facial expressions and emotions. These shots provide opportunities to actors and actresses to show their acting skills. Close-up shots are frequently used as reaction shots to show the character's reactions and emotions. It is abbreviated as CU. Figure 1.2 shows an example of close-up shot.



*Figure 1.2 : Close-up shot*

- 3) **Medium close-up (MCU):** Medium close-up shot is generally framed from just below the armpit or lower chest. This shot is also called as head and shoulders shot because it captures head and shoulders both. Bust shot is one of the more popular name of a medium close-up. You can use this shot to show your character's reactions and emotions. It reveals some information about the background. Figure 1.3 shows the example of medium close-up.



*Figure 1.3 : Medium close-up shot*

- 4) **Medium shot (MS):** It is also called as mid-shot. In medium shot, you frame your character from just above or below the waist. It reveals information about the background. You can capture the body language and the activities of the characters. Figure 1.4 shows an example of medium shot.



*Figure 1.4 : Medium shot*

- 5) **Medium long shot (MLS):** It is an intermediate shot between the medium shot and the long shot. In medium long shot, you should frame your character from just below or above the knees. It is also called as three quarters shot because it covers three quarters of your character. Medium long shot reveals enough information about the background. You can show the activities of your characters through medium long shot. Figure 1.5 shows the example of medium long shot.



*Figure 1.5 : Medium long shot*

- 6) **Long shot (LS):** A Long shot (LS) is sometimes also known as wide shot or full shot. In a long shot, you frame the full body from head to toe. Long shot puts your character in the context. You can use this shot to establish your location. It provides detailed information about the background. You can show the activities of your characters with clear background details through this shot. Figure 1.6 shows the example of a long shot.



*Figure 1.6 : Long shot (LS)*



- 7) **Extreme long shot (ELS):** In this shot, background or location is more dominant than the character. It gives larger view of the location. Extreme long shot is often used as an establishing shot to establish the location. Generally, it comes at the beginning of any film or sequence to show the larger view of the location. You can see the example of extreme long shot in figure 1.7.



*Figure 1.7 : Extreme long shot*

#### **Activity 1**

Watch any film (preferably ethnographic film) just for two minutes and try to do following things:

- Count the number of shots used during these two minutes
- List the types of shots used during these two minutes

#### **5.3.3 Shots classified by camera angle**

You can also classify the shots on the basis of camera angles. Camera angle tells about the placement of camera in relation to the subject. For example, if the camera is placed at a higher place to the subject, it'll be called higher angle and the vice-versa. On this basis you can classify shots into following types:

- 1) Eye-level shot
- 2) High-angle shot
- 3) Low-angle shot
- 4) Bird's eye view shot
- 5) Worm's eye view shot

1) **Eye-level shot:** It is a normal shot. You can frame an eye-level shot by placing the camera at the eye level of the character. Eye level shot provides a normal viewing effect. It is a common and most utilized shot. All the pictures from figure 1.1 to 1.7 are the examples of eye-level shots.

2) **High-angle shot:** As name suggests, in high-angle shot, the camera is placed at the higher level. It gives an effect as you are looking down at the subject. You can use high angle shot to show your character weaker or less important. High-angle shots are also used to show those things which can't be shown through eye-level shot. Figure 1.8 presents an example of high-angle shot.



*Figure 1.8 : High-angle shot*

- 3) **Low-angle shot:** In this type of shot, you place the camera at lower level. It gives the effect as you are looking up at a taller or bigger thing. Low-angle shot makes the subject stronger, important and dominant. Figure 1.9 is an example of low-angle shot.



*Figure 1.9 : Low-angle shot*

- 4) **Bird's eye view shot:** This shot provides a view as a bird observing something on ground from the sky. It is also called overhead shot. In this type of shot, you place the camera just above the subject and location. This shot gives a complete view of the location where the action is going on. You can use this shot to reveal the information about the location and action which are not possible to be shown through a high-angle shot. Figure 1.10 shows the example of bird's eye view shot.



*Figure 1.10 : Bird's eye view shot*

- 5) **Worm's eye view shot:** It is an extreme low-angle shot. It gives effect like a worm looking at the bigger or taller things. You can frame a worm's eye view shot by placing the camera far below the subject. It exaggerates the subject's appearance and makes it very strong and dominant like a giant. Figure 1.12 shows the example of worm's eye view shot.



*Figure 1.12 : Worm's eye view shot*

### 5.3.4 Other types of shots

There are few other types of shots which are used frequently in filmmaking or video production. You should know about these shots. These are following:

- 1) **Over-the-shoulder shot (OTS):** Figure 1.13 shows an example of over-the-shoulder shot. The name of this shot refers to the placement of camera just behind the shoulder of a character, presenting a view of what the character sees. Generally, it is used to show conversations between two characters.



*Figure 1.13 : Over-the-shoulder shot (OTS)*

- 2) **Point-of-view shot (POV):** Point-of-view shot shows the things from the viewpoint of a character. Figure 1.14 shows the example of a point-of-view shot.



*Figure 1.14 : Point-of-view shot*



- 3) **Reaction shot:** Reaction shot is very important in storytelling. You frame this shot to show the reaction of a character on any dialogue or action. For example, just imagine a scene in which three characters are discussing something. One of the characters reveals a shocking information. Now you'll have to show the reactions of other two characters through reaction shots. Reaction shots show the facial expressions and emotions of the characters. Generally, reaction shots are framed as close-up or medium close-up shots. An example of reaction shot is shown in figure 1.15.



*Figure 1.15 : Reaction shot*

### Check Your Progress 1

Answer briefly.

- 1) What is shot?

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- 2) When will you use extreme long shot?

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- 3) Explain the differences between high-angle shot and low-angle shot.

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- 4) What is the smallest unit of a film?
  - a) Shot
  - b) Frame
  - c) Scene
  - d) Sequence
- 5) To show the character's reaction (reaction shot), you will use \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) Long shot
  - b) Extreme long shot
  - c) Close-up shot
  - d) Knee shot

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## 5.4 CAMERA MOVEMENT

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Camera movement refers to the movement of a camera while recording a shot. It is an important element of the visual language. It helps in storytelling and getting involvement of the audiences. Camera movements can also create or add emotions in a shot. The type of movement and the speed of movement both create some meanings. Camera movements are very important in filmmaking and you must know about the commonly used common camera movements.

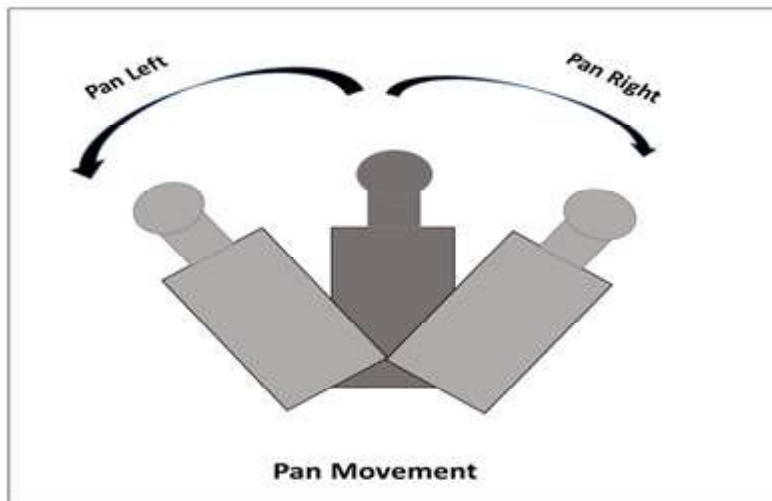
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## 5.5 TYPES OF CAMERA MOVEMENTS AND THEIR USES

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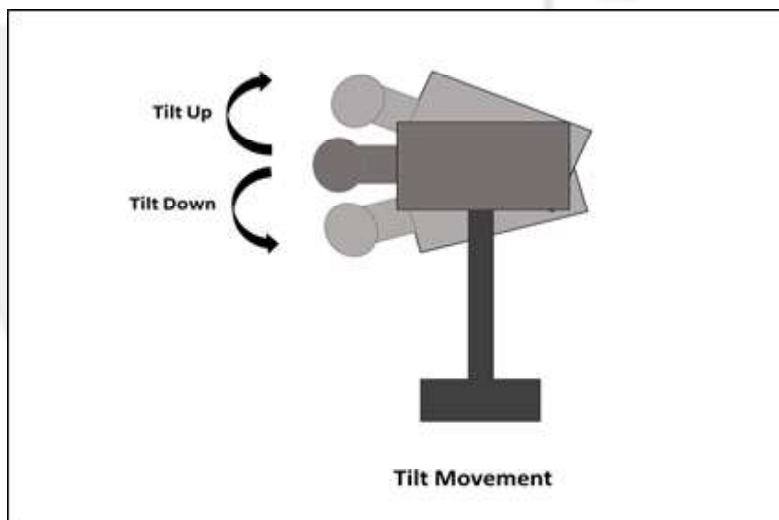
As we discussed earlier, there are various types of camera movements that create dynamic shots. Few important camera movements are following:

- 1) Pan
  - 2) Tilt
  - 3) Pedestal
  - 4) Dolly/Track
  - 5) Zoom
  - 6) Truck
  - 7) Arc
  - 8) Crane movements
  - 9) Handheld camera movements
  - 10) Movements with the help of camera stabilizers
- 1) **Pan:** Pan is a horizontal movement in which you can move your camera from right to left or left to right. In panning, camera mount stays stationary. Panning gives effect like looking from side to side while standing at one place. You can use pan to follow the movement of a character or to reveal the information about any place. Figure 1.16 displays the pan movement.



*Figure 1.16 : Pan Movement*

- 2) **Tilt:** Tilt is a vertical movement in which you can move your camera up or down. Like pan, camera mount stays stationary in tilting also. Tilting gives effect like looking up or down while standing at one place. Tilt movement can be used to follow the upward or downward movements of your character. You can use this movement to reveal more information about your location. Figure 1.17 shows the tilt movement.



*Figure 1.17 : Tilt Movement*

- 3) **Pedestal:** Pedestal is a type of camera mount generally used in studios. In pedestal up/down, camera moves up and down without any change in its vertical or horizontal axis. You should not be confused between tilt and pedestal. In tilt, camera mount stays stationary, there is no change in the height of camera mount, only camera pivots up or down. But in pedestal, the height of camera mount changes. In pedestal up, camera moves upward as the height of camera mount increases and vice versa in pedestal down. It is difficult to do this movement with general tripods. Figure 1.18 explains the pedestal movement.

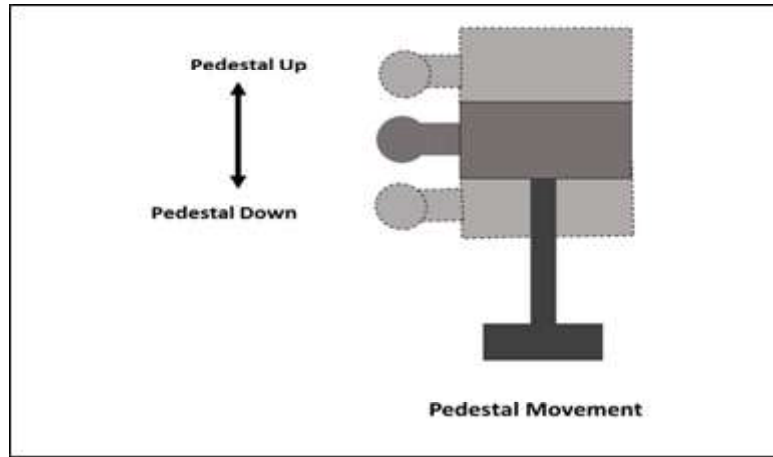


Figure 1.18 Pedestal Movement

- 4) **Dolly/Track:** Dolly or track is a movement of camera towards or away from the subject. If you move the camera towards the subject, it will be called 'dolly in' or 'track in' whereas if camera goes away from the subject it will be called 'dolly out' or 'track out'. Wheeled camera mounts and tracks are used for this movement. This movement maintains the normal perspective. It gives the effect as you are moving towards or away from the subject. Figure 1.19 explains the dolly or track movement.

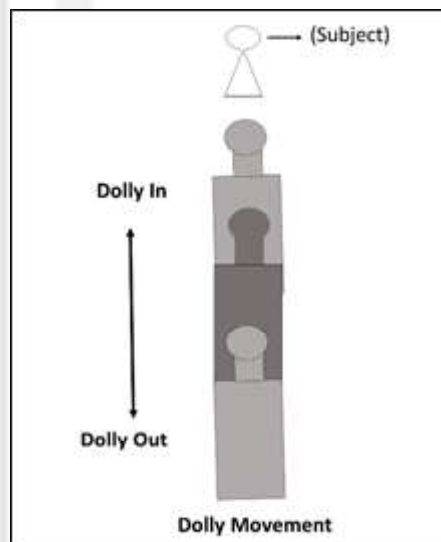
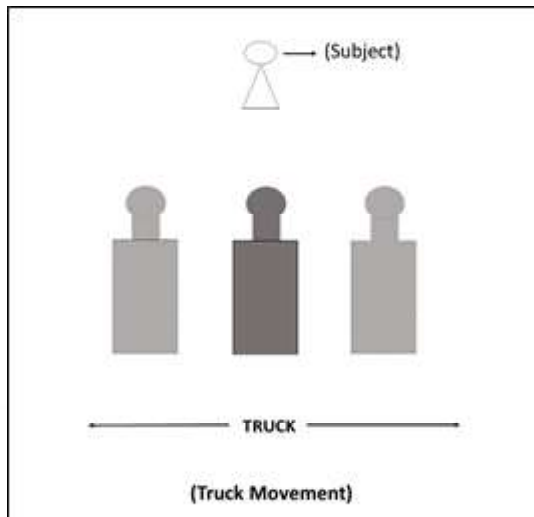


Figure 1.19 : Dolly movement

- 5) **Zoom:** Technically zoom is not a camera movement because it doesn't require any movement of camera. Zooming changes the focal length of a zoom lens. While zooming in, you increase the focal length and as a result the angle of view is narrowed. 'Zoom in' magnifies the subject and remove few elements from the frame due to narrowed angle of view. On the other hand, in zooming out, focal length is decreased and angle of view is widened. As a result, 'zoom out' reduces the size of subject and includes more elements into the frame located around the subject.

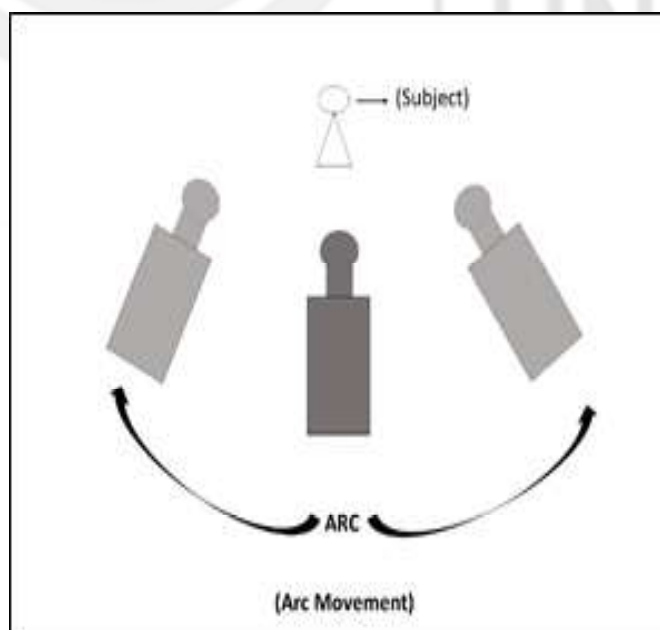
You should not be confused between dolly and zoom. 'Dolly in' gives an effect like you are coming towards the subject. It provides normal perspective shifts, but 'zoom in' just magnifies the subject. In 'dolly in' you feel the depth of space but 'zoom in' lacks it and looks artificial.

- 6) **Truck:** Like dolly, truck is also a camera movement performed with the help of wheeled camera mounts and tracks, but in trucking you move the camera sideways. If you move the camera right, it is called 'truck right' or if you move the camera left, it is called 'truck left'. You should not be confused between 'pan' and 'truck'. In 'pan', camera mount (tripod or pedestal) stays stationary only camera moves right or left on its axis, but in trucking camera mount moves right or left along with the camera. For example, if you want to stay with your character who is moving straight, you can use the 'truck movement'. Figure 1.20 demonstrates the truck movement.



*Figure 1.20 : Truck Movement*

- 7) **Arc:** When you truck your camera on a curved path, it is called arc. Arc movement can be arc right or arc left. In this movement, camera moves around the subject in a semicircle. You can use arc movement to reveal more information about your subject, to shoot a moving subject and to bring visual Variety in your film. Figure 1.21 shows the arc movement.



*Figure 1.21: Arc movement*



- 8) **Crane movements:** In filmmaking or professional video productions, cranes are used frequently. The crane is an equipment which has a long arm and the camera can be mounted on that. We can perform many movements with the help of crane. ‘Crane up’ and ‘crane down’ are used for the movement of crane arm upward and downward along with the camera whereas ‘tongue left’ and ‘tongue right’ are used for left and right movements of the crane arm. With the help of crane, we can do multiple camera movements. A camera mounted on a crane can be operated manually or with the help of remote control. Generally, the small cranes are called jibs.

You can use crane movements for various purposes. For example, you can shoot a subject from high angle and then come to eye-level in one shot with the help of crane movements. Cranes can help to take bird’s eye-view and other high angle shots. With the help of crane, you can combine multiple movements and get the desired views.

- 9) **Handheld camera movements:** If camera operator holds the camera in his/her hands during shooting, it is called handheld camera shoot. In handheld camera shoot, camera is not mounted on tripod or any other camera mounts. Handheld camera shoot provides greater freedom for different movements but at the cost of jerks and shakes. You can see the use of handheld cameras in news gathering because many times camera persons of news channels don’t find enough time and space to fix their cameras on tripods. Documentaries also use the handheld camera shots.

Sometimes handheld camera is used purposefully to create certain effects. You can use shaky handheld camera shots to show nervousness, instability and anxiety. These shots can also be used for other creative purposes.

- 10) **Movements with the help of camera stabilizers:** Movements with the help of camera stabilizers: Camera stabilizers are the equipment which enable the smooth and shake free handheld camera movements. Variety of camera stabilizers are available from simple to complex ones. Steadicam is the leading brand. The camera operator can wear the suitable stabilizer and mount the camera on it. Now he can move anywhere and on any type of surface. These camera stabilizers provide a great degree of freedom for different complex camera movements.

Suppose you are a camera operator and a camera mount is fitted on your body with a technology to minimize the shakes created by a human body. Now you are free to move during shoot. Just think about the degree of freedom you can enjoy during shooting.

**Check Your Progress 2**

Answer briefly.

- 1) What is camera movement?

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2) Why do we use different camera movements in film production?

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3) Why is zoom different from dolly?

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4) Explain the difference between 'pan' and 'truck' movements?

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5) In pan movement, you'll move camera \_\_\_\_\_.

- a) Up
- b) Down
- c) Up and down
- d) Right and left

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## 5.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit, we have discussed the different shots and camera movements. If you want to write a story, knowledge of language is must. In the same way, filmmaking requires the understanding of visual language and its grammar. Once you understand the visual language well, you can use it to produce any type of film including ethnographic films. The theme of the film decides the style of the visual language. For example, as you learnt in previous units, in ethnographic films we shoot the reality, so we select the shots and camera movements accordingly.

Shots and camera movements are very crucial elements of the visual grammar. The proper understanding of these two elements help the filmmaker to produce a good film which can communicate its message properly, smoothly and interestingly.

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## 5.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See section 1.2
- 2) See point no.-7 of Sub-section 1.3.2
- 3) See point no.- 2 and 3 of Sub-section 1.3.3
- 4) b)
- 5) c)

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See section 1.4
- 2) See section 1.4 and 1.5
- 3) See point no.- 4 and 5 of Section 1.5
- 4) See point no.- 1 and 6 of Section 1.5
- 5) d)