Exploring Generational Culture through Oral Histories

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Objectives

• **Introduce** project-based learning

• **Describe** the oral history project

• **Offer** variations for different levels and ages
Project-based learning is meaningful and personal to the student.

Project-based learning has a challenging problem or question that is real and includes a public product.

It incorporates reflection, writing, and revision.

Adapted from "Gold Standard 2011: Essential Project Design".
Oral History

*noun*

the collection and study of historical information using sound recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events.
Project overview

Students

- **interview** older adults in which they ask questions about personal events, history, politics, and changes in society and technology
- **summarize** the interview information
- **create** presentations that include timelines
- **present** their projects orally
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview:
- MARIE
- FERNANDO

- In August 1945, the US dropped two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- President Kennedy was assassinated on 22 November 1963. He was often called one of the most powerful men in the world.
- The wedding of Lady Diana Spencer (1961–97) and Prince Charles on 29 July 1981 was watched by 750 million people around the world.
- The death of Queen Elizabeth II on 9 September 2022 was marked with huge public displays throughout the world.
- The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 was a turning point in European history.
What were some important events in your life?

- Moving 400 miles
- Graduating
- Leaving friends

What were you doing when you were in school?

- Playing with friends
- Hanging out
- Watching TV
- Playing sports

What were you like as a child?

- Shy
- Excited
- Mischievous

What is your best memory from childhood?

- Going on a family vacation
- Celebrating a birthday
- Winning a game
- Watching a sunrise

What is your favorite childhood toy?

- Doll
- Stuffed animal
- Bicycle
- Sandbox

What was your favorite food growing up?

- Pizza
- Ice cream
- Hamburgers
- Nachos

What was your favorite TV show?

- Cartoons
- Kids TV shows
- Razorblades
- Blues Brothers

What was your favorite movie?

- Bugs Bunny
- Back to the Future
- Titanic
- Frozen

What were some great books you read growing up?

- The Chronicles of Narnia
- The Cat in the Hat
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar
- The Cat in the Hat Comes Back
Think about a conversation with a grandparent, older friend, or elderly neighbor. What did you talk about?
My grandfather explained to me why he loves chocolate so much. When he was a small boy in Japan, the American soldiers would give children chocolate. Last summer when I went home, I brought him American chocolate and he cried a little. I didn’t understand why he cried until I interviewed him and he told me about his childhood.
1. Teacher preparation
2. Directing students
3. Preparing for interviews
4. Conducting the interviews
5. Preparing for presentations
Phase one:
Teacher preparation
Finding the interviewees

English speakers in the community
Teachers
University students
International employees

Grandparents
Relatives
Family friends
Community members
Teacher's Corner: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills

This month’s Teacher’s Corner provides ideas for incorporating critical thinking activities in your language classroom.

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Week 1 - Language Experience Approach (LEA)

It takes time to design activities and tasks that both target language skills and encourage critical thinking. Project-based learning (also known as experiential learning) is one approach you can use to integrate language-learning goals with critical thinking skills. Project-based learning tasks and activities combine language and action so that learners learn by doing (Brown and Lee, 2015). Learners must understand, examine, analyze, evaluate, and create while using English to complete a task or activity. The result is a language skills task or activity that promotes critical thinking skills.
Finding the interviewees

Teacher planning time

Discuss and write about older generations (1-5 hours)
Develop questions and practice interviewing (1-3 hours)
Conduct interviews (2-4 hours)
Summarize the interviews and create the presentations (1-6 hours)
Present the final products (1-2 hours)
Phase two: Directing students
Questions for students

Do your grandparents live with you or on their own?

Who are some other older people you know?
Activities for students

Students **talk** in a large group or smaller groups about the objects or pictures of objects.

Students **write** about the objects or life in the past.
Phase three:
Preparing for interviews
✓ Students **develop** their questions

✓ Students **practice** interviewing skills
Students generate questions

• Who were your parents?

• When were you born?

• Where did you live when you were a child?

• How much money did you earn in your first job?

• What did you do for fun?
Questions posted around room

Students walk around and choose questions.
What was the happiest moment of your life?

Who was the most important person in your life?

What are you proudest of in your life?

What are the most important lessons you've learned in life?
Family

- Where did you grow up?

- Do you have any siblings? What were they like growing up?

  - What were your parents like?
School

- Did you enjoy school?
- Are you still friends with anyone from that time in your life?
- What are your best memories of grade school/high school?
Adult life

- How did you meet your husband/wife?
- How has being a parent changed you?
- What do you do for work?
- What lessons has your work life taught you?
History

- What are some historical events you remember?

- Who was the leader of your country when you were young?
Technology

- What are some technological changes you can tell me about?

- How has technology changed you or society?
Society

- What did people do for fun?
- How did people express themselves?
- What movies, books, and/or magazines were popular?
Students practice interviewing skills

1. Build fluency
2. Learn polite phrases
3. Conduct mock interviews
4. Mini grammar and vocabulary lessons
Talking lines – fluency building activity

Pairs of students talk for 90 seconds, then one line moves one space, then repeat.
Don’t forget to be polite!

*Did you say_____?

*Could you please repeat that?

*Could you say that slower, please?

*Do you mind repeating that last bit?

*I’m sorry, I didn’t catch that.*
Students interview their classmates
Mini-lesson: quotation marks

Direct quote: When you use someone else’s words in your writing

“I had two brothers and one sister.”

My interviewee said, “I had two brothers and one sister.”

Capitalization and punctuation

“I worked in a school before I got married.”

My interviewee said, “I worked in a school before I got married.”
Mini-lesson: reporting verbs

Say + that + clause

“I had two brothers and one sister.”

She said that she had two brothers and one sister.

Tell + someone + (that) + clause

“I worked in a school before I got married.”

She told me that she worked in a school before she got married.
Phase four: Conducting the interviews
Guidelines

✓ Teachers make final transportation arrangements, if necessary.

✓ Students ask permission if they want to record the interview.

✓ Students ask most important questions first.

✓ Students are prepared if the person doesn’t want to answer a question.
Interviewing

- Write responses in English.
- Allow for 30-60 minutes for the interview.
- Take pictures, if possible.
Phase five:
Writing, researching, creating, and presenting
Advanced level

- **Write** 500-1000 word summaries of the two interviews
- **Conduct** peer reviews
- **Revise** their drafts
Intermediate level - structured

Sentences

I asked my interviewee about ______________________.

He said ______________________.

My interviewee worked at ______________________.

She said her favorite childhood experience was ________.
Beginning level – question and answer

**Question:**

**Answer:**

- What was your first job?
- What did you do for fun?
- What was your favorite trip?
- There are many, but I enjoy visiting countries like Argentina, Canada, and Ireland.

- Spikeball
- Back side!
Research

• Dates of important events
• Significant details from interviews
• Specific topics that piqued student’s interest
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Teacher-guided</td>
<td>Semi-guided</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Websites</td>
<td>Specific websites</td>
<td>Suggest certain</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Books</td>
<td>or books with</td>
<td>websites or books,</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Librarians</td>
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<td>independent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or events</td>
<td>research</td>
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</table>
Creating the final products

Students need time to incorporate information in a personal, academic, and creative format.
Options for various levels

Drawings
Handwriting
Word-processing
Voice recording
PowerPoint
Prezi
Academic poster
Paper poster
ORAL HISTORY PRESENTATION

Student: Danilo Silva
THELMA
75 years old
Born: July 23rd, 1939
First Job: Wash Disher

MARCIA
46 years old
Born: April 7th, 1968
First Job: Photographer
THELMA

- Basketball and Gymnastics (high school)
- First love when she was 15 years old
- 4 Babies
- 19 Grandchildren
- 28 Great Grandchildren
THELMA (Childhood)

- 1942 First real doll
- Good values
- “Climb Climb Sunshine Mountain”
THELMA (Adulthood)

• 1979 Personal problems

• Got over years later ...

• Started to help people.
MARCIA

• “Plano Color” most influential event, 1993.
• First love: 17 years old
• They separated 2 years later.
MARCIA (childhood)

- She got whopping cough.
- Her family didn’t have very much money.
MARCIA (Adulthood)

- Singer in the church
- Journalist (radio)
- Missionary
Summary

**THELMA**

- Born: 1939
- First real doll: 1942
- First love: 1954
- First job: 1959
- Personal Problems: 1979
- Recovered and working for her: 2014

**MARCIA**

- Born: 1968
- Whopping cough: 1980
- First job: 1984
- First love: 1985
- "Plano Color": 1993
- Working for a comfortable life: 2014
Presenting

- Half the students present while the other half listens and asks questions
- Invited guests listen and ask questions
Evaluation
### Oral History Project Rubric

#### Visual presentation
- Shows information in a logical, interesting format (may include pictures)
- Demonstrates adequate planning
- **Research** from outside sources is incorporated to inform audience of important historical, cultural, social, economic, technological and/or political events
- Appropriate citations are used when necessary (APA format)

#### Written interview summaries (two–six paragraphs)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heading includes student’s name, course, instructor’s name, date, and draft number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Titles are centered</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summaries are typed using 12-point font and are double-spaced with one-inch (2.5 cm) margins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paragraphs are well organized</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitions and connectors are used to achieve cohesiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
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<tr>
<td>Displays a clear sense of purpose for the audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes historical, cultural, social, economic, political and/or personal events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates the student’s ability to interpret feedback, revise, and edit effectively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verb tenses and agreement contain only minimum errors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentences are varied and correctly structured, and appropriate transitions are used to achieve cohesiveness</td>
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<td>Quotations and paraphrases are generally correct and introduced with appropriate report verbs or phrases</td>
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<td>Vocabulary</td>
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<td>Vocabulary is appropriate to context and for the audience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
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<td>Appropriate capitalizations are used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Words are spelled correctly</td>
<td>Pass/fail</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total Points**
My grandfather told me that he received a letter to be a kamikaze fighter for Japan in World War II; however, my grandfather never had to fight. The day after he received the letter, the war ended. I never knew this about my grandfather. If he had gone to war, I wouldn’t have been born.
I always knew that my mother had a tough childhood, but I had never asked her specific questions about her circumstances. By asking her to share more of her personal story, I learned that my mother and her brother were raised by their aunt in a favela near Rio. She never talked about her past like this... I never knew!
References

Buck Institute for Education (2015), *Gold Standard PBL: Essential Project Design Element*


References


https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/05-43-4-d.pdf
Oral history resources

Abraham Lincoln High School Oral History Project: 
http://www.alhsoralhistoryproject.org/word_press/

Tell me your stories: An oral history curriculum: 
http://www.tellmeyourstories.org/

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History: 
https://www.lib.lsu.edu/oralhistory

Grosse Pointe Historical Society: 

Grammar resources

Grammarly Blog: 
https://www.grammarly.com/blog/quotation-marks/