

# 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



# 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



## Interviews:

- MARY 
- FERNANDO 







Ther...

LIFE ~~IS~~ PAST

ST. NICHOLAS CATHEDRAL



...

What are some important events in your life?

How do you remember your high school, college or other education? What are your favorite memories from that time?

What are your favorite memories from your childhood?

What are your favorite memories from your teenage years?



What are some of your best memories?

What are your favorite memories from your childhood?

What are your favorite memories from your teenage years?

What are your favorite memories from your college years?

What are your favorite memories from your career?

What are your favorite memories from your family?

What are your favorite memories from your friends?

What are your favorite memories from your travels?

What are your favorite memories from your hobbies?

What are your favorite memories from your pets?

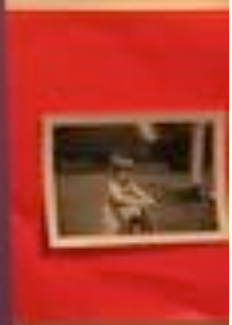
What are your favorite memories from your volunteer work?

What are your favorite memories from your community?

What are your favorite memories from your church?

What are your favorite memories from your faith?

What are your favorite memories from your life?



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

# americanenglish.state.gov



## Teacher's Corner: Teaching Critical Thinking Skills

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

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

#### 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.

#### Downloads

##### Week 1 Activity

 [Text \(PDF\)](#)





# Finding the interviewees



(2014). "Brazilian Kids Learn English by Video Chatting With Lonely Elderly Americans," *Adweek*.

# 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?*

Family

Personal

School

Adult  
life

Society

History

Technology



# Questions posted around room



Students walk around and choose questions.





# Personal

- *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**

# Writing





# 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



# Research



- Dates of important events
- Significant details from interviews
- Specific topics that piqued student's interest

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
Teacher-guided <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Websites</li><li>• Books</li><li>• librarians</li></ul>	Semi-guided  <i>Specific</i> websites or books with <b>specific dates</b> <b>or events</b>	Independent  <i>Suggest certain</i> websites or books, <b>independent</b> <b>research</b>

# Creating the final products



Students need time to incorporate information in a personal, academic, and creative format.

# Options for various levels

Drawings

Prezi

Handwriting

Academic poster

Word-processing

Paper poster

Voice recording

PowerPoint



ORAL

History

PRESENTATION

N

Student: Danilo Silva

# *Preview*

**THELMA**

**75 years old**

**Born: July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939**

**First Job: Wash Disher**

**MARCIA**

**46 years old**

**Born: April 7<sup>th</sup>, 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.



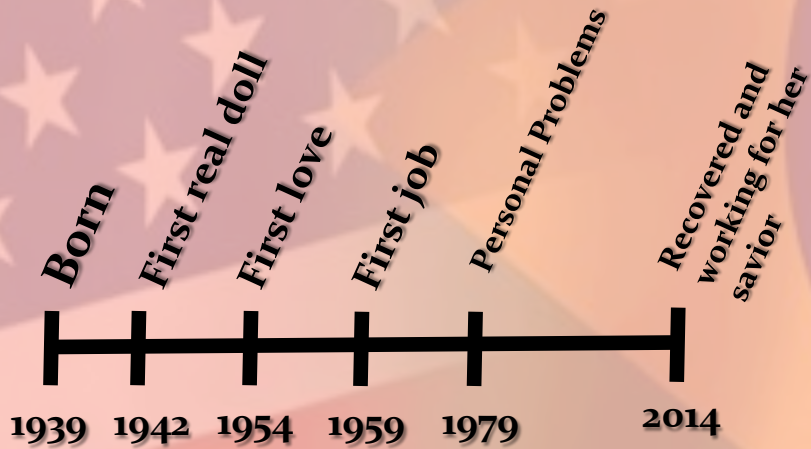
# MARCIA (Adulthood)

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

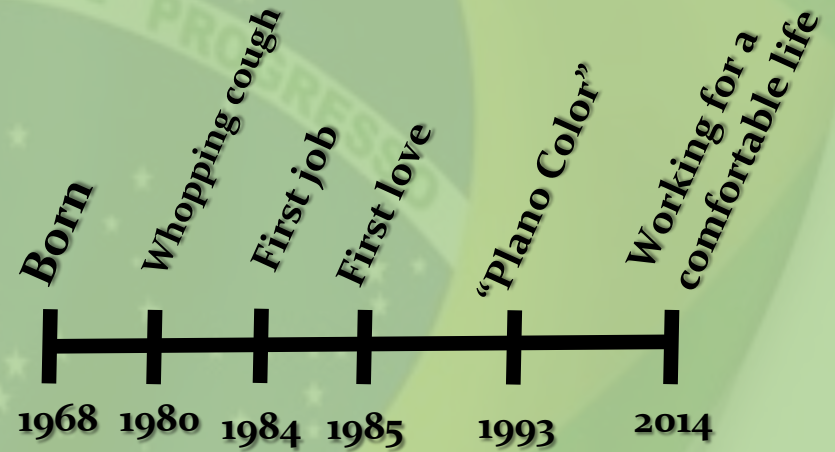


# Summary

## THELMA



## MARCIA



# Presenting



- Half the students present while the other half listens and asks questions
- Invited guests listen and ask questions

# Evaluation

Oral History Project Rubric

11

Visual presentation	Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows information in a logical, interesting format (may include pictures)</li> <li>Demonstrates adequate planning</li> <li>Research from outside sources is incorporated to inform audience of important historical, cultural, social, economic, technological and/or political events</li> <li>Appropriate citations are used when necessary (APA format)</li> </ul>	40

Written interview summaries (two – six paragraphs)		
Format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heading includes student's name, course, instructor's name, date, and draft number</li> <li>Titles are centered</li> <li>Summaries are typed using 12-point font and are double-spaced with one-inch (2.5 cm) margins</li> </ul>	Pass/fail
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paragraphs are well organized</li> <li>Transitions and connectors are used to achieve cohesiveness</li> </ul>	10
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Displays a clear sense of purpose for the audience</li> <li>Includes historical, cultural, social, economic, political and/or personal events</li> <li>Demonstrates the student's ability to interpret feedback, revise, and edit effectively</li> </ul>	20
Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verb tenses and agreement contain only minimum errors</li> <li>Sentences are varied and correctly structured, and appropriate transitions are used to achieve cohesiveness.</li> <li>Quotations and paraphrases are generally correct and introduced with appropriate report verbs or phrases</li> </ul>	20
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocabulary is appropriate to content and for the audience</li> </ul>	10
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate capitalization is used</li> <li>Words are spelled correctly</li> </ul>	Pass/fail
<b>Total Points</b>		

*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*

[http://www.bie.org/object/document/gold\\_standard\\_pbl\\_essential\\_project\\_design\\_elements](http://www.bie.org/object/document/gold_standard_pbl_essential_project_design_elements)

Lavin, C., Petree, R., & Herrington, S. (October 2015).

*Discovering personal histories: An oral history project.* SLWIS

News – The Newsletter of the Second Language Writing Interest

Section, TESOL <http://newsmanager.commpartners.com/tesolslwis/issues/2015-10-07/4.html>

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Nudd, T. (2014), “Brazilian Kids Learn English by Video Chatting With Lonely Elderly Americans.”

<http://www.adweek.com/creativity/perfect-match-brazilian-kids-learn-english-video-chatting-lonely-elderly-americans-157523/>

Tessema, K. A., (2005) *Stimulating Writing through Project-Based Tasks*, *English Teaching Forum*, 43(4), pp 22-28.

[https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource\\_files/05-43-4-d.pdf](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/](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:

<http://www.gphistorical.org/pdf-files/oralhistory.pdf>

# Grammar resources

Grammarly Blog:

<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/quotation-marks/>