

CLASSPROJECT



The story of my life, my own biography

English project designed by Lluís M. Bennàssar & Victoria Osuna • October 2014 - December 2015

v.1

Project/sequence GUIDELINE

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1. Preface

Adults have a rich repository of experience from which to draw and a biography is the story of someone's life--but it's a lot more than just a list of events, dates, and times. Students could discover some of the elements that make biographies compelling works of literature, go over the steps and take to write a biography on their own! The task of course needs lots of scaffolding but could be challenging and interesting enough to engage adult learners. Students could develop their fluency, their speaking and writing skills through different activities focused on their life experiences.

2. The project/sequence

2.1. The context

This project is addressed to adult students of English as a Foreign Language - Level 2 and 3 (with certain modifications/adaptations to suit each level). This project encompasses activities in which both oral and written comprehension and production are involved. It also incorporates grammar points, such as the simple past and the structure of questions, which students are to use in their productions.

The project should take around 8 sessions in total.

The project at a glance using a mindmap:

[link](#)

2.2. Objectives, competences, contents and assessment criteria

a. Objectives:

- Gain knowledge of the backgrounds of their own grandparents through personal interviews or research
- Develop communication skills by practicing a variety of speaking techniques such as making eye contact, asking and responding to questions while interviewing, and orally presenting biographical information to classmates
- Review and expand their knowledge of text structure and practice using technology in relevant ways
- Practice working collaboratively to develop their biographies

b. Competences:

1. Mostrar interès per desenvolupar les habilitats lingüístiques bàsiques, tant productives com receptives, per fer ús de la llengua estrangera com a mitjà de comunicació i d'expressió personal.
2. Manifestar una actitud positiva i oberta cap a l'aprenentatge i ús de la llengua estrangera.
3. Construir els nous aprenentatges sobre la base de les experiències i coneixements previs, tant lingüístics com socioculturals.
4. Adoptar una actitud oberta i respectuosa davant d'elements diferencials entre la llengua estrangera i la llengua pròpia.
5. Manifestar una actitud de confiança en la pròpia capacitat d'aprenentatge i ús de les llengües estrangeres i participar activament en el control i l'avaluació del propi aprenentatge.
6. Valorar l'ús de les TIC com una oportunitat més d'interacció amb la nova llengua.
7. Mostrar iniciativa per usar estratègies que permetin resoldre situacions comunicatives reals en contextos habituals i propers.

c. Contents of the curriculum (Continguts del currículum):

NIVELL 2

Dimensió comunicativa

Comunicació oral

Objectius

- Comprendre globalment textos o missatges orals curts i articulats de forma lenta i clara, que facin referència al tema de la unitat, biografies i experiències, i que utilitzin estructures lingüístiques simples del passat.
- Realitzar descripcions o exposicions breus i preparades prèviament, amb termes senzills, sobre persones o fets concrets passat.
- Utilitzar estratègies verbals i no verbals i exercitar habilitats comunicatives empàtiques i assertives per facilitar i millorar la comunicació oral.

Continguts

- Discriminació i producció i diferències fonamentals i contrastos entre les tres pronunciacions possibles de la terminació -ed dels verbs regulars.
- Expressions i vocabulari d'ús freqüent, referits a objectes, llocs o persones, en el context d'una biografia.
- Introducció a les formes simples del passat.
- Connectors per unir paraules o grups de paraules.
- Característiques bàsiques de la descripció i la narració.
- Informar i obtenir informació: descriure o narrar experiències.
- Estratègies de compensació en la producció oral: demanar aclariments o repeticions, demanar el significat de mots desconeguts...
- Recursos paralingüístics i del llenguatge no verbal, com a suport per facilitar l'expressió i la comprensió de la llengua.
- El coneixement metalingüístic per a la producció i millora dels textos orals.
- Patrons bàsics de ritme, entonació i accentuació de paraules i grups de paraules.

Assessment criteria (descriptors d'avaluació de la dimensió comunicativa)

- Comprendre i utilitzar vocabulari i estructures lingüístiques bàsiques per descriure aspectes d'una biografia i d'un objecte representatiu lligat al record d'una persona.
- Comprendre i produir frases simples i expressions bàsiques, relacionades amb una biografia, emprant algun element per a la coherència del text, connectors bàsics per enllaçar paraules o grups de paraules i formes verbals simples de passat i d'ús freqüent.
- Seguir instruccions orals del context classe, breus i senzilles, que siguin formulades de manera lenta i amb cura.
- Descriure les característiques bàsiques de la vida d'un avi o una àvia i d'un objecte relacionat o representatiu d'ells, emprant vocabulari d'ús molt freqüent i frases simples.
- Utilitzant estratègies verbals, no verbals i elements paralingüístics.
- Produir les paraules o expressions amb una pronúncia que permeti fer-les intel·ligibles globalment i, si cal, utilitzar recursos del llenguatge no verbal i estratègies de compensació per facilitar la comunicació: pauses, repeticions...

2.3. Activities

ACTIVITY 1

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: project presentation: what is a biography?

TIMING: 20 minutes

RESOURCES: board

PROCEDURE:

Reflect on what a biography is by asking questions such as:

- How many parts does this word have?
- What do these different parts mean?
- What type of information does a biography include?
- Whose biographies interest us? Why?
- Why are biographies written? What are they used for?

DYNAMICS: interaction between all students and the teacher;

oral communication, writing of key words on the board.

ACTIVITY 2

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: exploration of a biography

TIMING: 40 minutes

RESOURCES: photocopies, video

PROCEDURE:

- Analysis of a couple of biographies provided by the teacher (written documents); reading aloud, noticing structure, main topics/information included and language used by highlighting keywords/phrases in pairs and reporting back to the class.
- Screening of a couple of video of short biographies (YouTube videos); taking note of keywords related to the main topics/content covered.
- Comparing both types of biographies (written texts and videos): what do they have in common? Any differences?

DYNAMICS: Students take notes individually, then share the information in groups, and finally report their contributions back to the class.

ACTIVITY 3:

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: listen to different podcasts to focus on different topics which a biography can cover.

TIMING : 30 minutes

RESOURCES: (video podcasts):

#1250 What is my best childhood memory?

<http://ello.org/video/1201/V1250-On-Childhood.htm>

#1231 Did you enjoy student life?

<http://ello.org/video/1201/V1231-Tina-Student.htm>

#1240 What was your childhood dream?

<http://ello.org/video/1201/V1240-Daniel-Childhood.htm>

PROCEDURE: students watch the video podcasts and note down main topics covered and language used (verb tense, vocabulary...). Students start making a list of possible topics for their own biography.

DYNAMICS: work in pairwork and then share with the class. Finally, individual work (for the list of topics part).

ACTIVITY 4:

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: writing and recording of sentences for biography.

TIMING: 20 minutes.

RESOURCES: piece of paper, audio recorder (vocaroo)

PROCEDURE: students write a few sentences based on the list of topics created in activity 3, get it revised and practice reading them aloud and recording them using vocaroo.

DYNAMICS: Students work Individually

ACTIVITY 5:

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: My grandfather Miquel: students listen to a podcast

[My grandfather Miquel](#)

TIMING: 3 sessions

PROCEDURE & RESOURCES & DYNAMICS:

FIRST SESSION**Preparing questions**

Individually students write five questions they would like to find out about their grandfather or grandmother.

Next they do it in pairs. They must collaborate and negotiate and agree on five questions. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

Then they get together in groups of four and come up with five definitive questions. They assign a speaker. The speaker shouts out the questions.

I get feedback from students and draw up a list. I print out the list and give a copy to each student.

Listening to the podcast

Then students listen to the podcast My grandfather Miquel. They listen to it several times. There's no limit to the amount of times they can listen to it because they have to check if they can answer the questions. Ideally students could listen to the podcast in the computer room and play it as many times as they see fit.

Does the podcast answer the questions they have drawn up?

I get feedback and together answer the questions.

Do other questions arise after listening to the podcast?

In pairs students discuss if other questions could be added or the questions they drew up could be improved.

I get feedback and revise the questions. I hand out a set of questions ([link to the suggested questions](#)) for students to compare to the list of questions we have created. Students see how to complement and combine both lists. I get feedback and draw up a final list.

SECOND SESSION**Minipresentations**

Students read the final list drawn up in the previous session. Could they answer the questions referred to their grandfather or grandmother? Students take ten minutes to answer as many of the questions they can. Then they make mini presentations with whatever information they managed to remember.

The teacher mentions that you know it can be difficult to talk about personal stories with people they do not know well and that they should share only what they feel comfortable sharing.

For homework students prepare the answers to the questions in the final list. I hand out some guidelines to conduct an interview and read them together and comment on them. Do they agree with them? Can they make any contributions?

HAND-OUT WITH IDEAS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY INTERVIEW

Bring an old prop, if it's possible, to the classroom and share it with your classmates.

E.g. an old photograph, favourite old songs, treasured items.

For those whose grandparent is dead, they can dig up old props, interview people who met them, do a little bit of research.

LINK TO PODCAST RUBRIC**THIRD SESSION****Biography popplet**

Students prepare a popplet with the information they gathered, either interviewing their grandparent or researching about him or her if they're dead. They scan a picture of their grandparent and upload it on popplet. They must comment on the picture bringing up facts from the grandparent's biography.

ACTIVITY 6:

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: how to form questions - a revision

TIMING: homework + 30 minutes

RESOURCES: online videos

PROCEDURE: students check structure of questions at home by watching a couple of online videos in which this grammar aspect is explained, they take note of the main point. Such notes are shared in class, first in groups/pairs and then altogether. A kind of shared grammar explanation will be written on the board. Students then revise their own questions for the family interview according to the grammar aspects previously covered.

DYNAMICS: Students work individually and in groups/pairs and finally altogether in class.

Videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyVw_yNXArg

(How to form questions in English - video in English)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RabrvUha-HA>

(How to form questions in English - video in Spanish, for those students who may need further clarification/help to understand)

ACTIVITY 7: (this activity is to be replaced by "creating a digital story")

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY: creation of a brief video

TIMING: homework + 60 minutes

RESOURCES: video tools (web, tool, application, media, worksheets,... Example: a video, an audio, an image)

PROCEDURE: based on the information gathered through the interviews and the popplet created, students are to think of images and text which could make up a brief clip. Sentences are written and revised. Students are then introduced to Animoto, the tool they will use for their clip creation. All clips will finally be shown in class.

DYNAMICS: Students work Individually, and the individual outcome (students' clips) are exhibited in class.

ACTIVITY 8: FOCUS ON GRAMMAR: THE PAST SIMPLE

ONE SESSION (1H 30')

Students watch a part of the video Past Tense each and then in groups of three they explain the rules to each other. Then they watch the three different parts together. Teacher gets feedback. (30')

[Link to part 1](#)

[Link to part 2](#)

[Link to part 3](#)

Students watch the video and comment on the rules of the Past Simple. Teacher gets feedback. (30')

[Link to the video Past Simple Tense, English Grammar Rules](#)

Students revise the irregular verbs in groups watching a video and completing a worksheet. Teacher gets feedback. (30')

[Link to the video Irregular Verbs in English](#)

[Link](#) to the worksheet Irregular Verbs (gapped) to be done watching the video

ACTIVITY 9: CREATING A DIGITAL STORY

TWO SESSIONS (EACH 1H30')

FIRST SESSION

I show students the video without sound: What relationship do all the things in the video have in common? (10')

After watching my video A French Dictionary (5') I ask students to come up with an idea to write about an object which they consider representative of their grandfather or grandmother. They have to write a proposal and exchange it with another partner. They draw a mindmap of what they want to include in the proposal. In groups they present their proposals. (15')

[Link to the video A old torn-up French Dictionary](#)

Next they have to elaborate their proposals and write a first draft (15').

They exchange drafts, read them and comment on them. (15')

I tell them to incorporate their peers' comments into their drafts and elaborate their drafts further. (15')

I tell them that now they have to look for suitable images on the Internet to illustrate their storyboard. (15')

SECOND SESSION

When they finish they can start using Animoto to record their video story and use the images they searched in the previous session. (15')

I give students a rubric to self-assess their first video story. The rubric is meant to help them improve their video, since this is not yet their final video.

Students tweak and touch up their videos to round them out. (15')

The rest of the class is devoted to watching students video creations and getting feedback and reflection. Part of the mark students get is from comments and feedback students give on their peers' videos. They have to write a short paragraph commenting on each one of the videos they have viewed (60').

2.4. Evaluation

How are you going to evaluate all the project/ sequence?

EVALUATION OF TASKS DONE DURING THE PROCESS: (30%)

1.- Activity 2 & 3 (exploration of a biography - written and video - & listening to podcasts): students are to come up with a checklist including the main characteristics of a biography (written documents, videos and

podcasts). This checklist can be typed and photocopies can be made and handed to students. This way students can have not only exemplar work of what they will be requested afterwards, but also a guidance of the main characteristics of such type of work to help them throughout the process.

2.- Activity 4 (writing and recording of sentences for biography): the teacher will revise students' written productions, add a comment on each one of them (comment-only marking) and make a list of mistakes and share them with all students. Sentences will be redrafted by students after this revision/correction activity and before the audio recording of such sentences. The recordings will be played in class and students will fill in the following basic feedback form:

- good things:
- things to improve/work on:

Aspects related to grammar, pronunciation and intonation will be commented on after listening to students' recordings.

3.- Activity 6 (how to form questions - a revision): each student will take notes while watching the videos. After this information is shared on the board or typed and projected, students correct the questions they have written before the grammar explanation. The teacher then collects questions, revise them, and asks questions to students based on the most commonly made mistakes.

FINAL PRODUCT: (70%)

Creation of a brief video: creating a digital story (see above).

A test including the main grammar points covered, vocabulary related to biographies, and some oral and written comprehension exercises (oral and written productions are evaluated in the video creation and the other tasks).

One aspect of assessment will be collaboration among students. Students will collaborate reviewing each other's work, giving feedback on each other's work and assessing it, and enriching peers' work by adding a different viewpoint or comparing and drawing conclusions.

Students podcasts and screencasts will be assessed according to two ad hoc rubrics.

[LINK PODCAST RUBRIC](#)

[LINK SCREENCAST RUBRIC](#)

Students have to make two contributions to the online forum on the Moodle site. The first contribution will be the script they have created for their podcast.

The second contribution will be the script they have created for their screencast.

From this contributions students will get a mark for writing.

Students have to answer an online self-grading quiz on irregular verbs embedded on the Moodle site. I have considered that they must answer the quiz as many times as necessary until they score at least 70% of the mark. The quiz is set with a time delay so that students are kept from taking the quiz over and over just to see if they get the right answers. The time delay makes them wait and hopefully makes them study to improve their results. They must take the online quiz on different days at least three times.

However, after several tries students are warned that they will take a final online test during class time and that they are expected to get at least a 70% score success if they want the mark to be included in their final mark. In order to qualify for the class test students have to do the online quiz at least 3 times. Students are not allowed to score low in the test if they want to get a mark that counts towards the global mark.

And since you get an online register students have to access the Moodle site to do the quiz.

Finally, but not least students have to answer the self-assessment worksheet.

The biographies students write will appear in the school's Sant Jordi's Book and in the Diari de la Barceloneta, in

a column devoted to the grandparent's of anonymous people who live in Barceloneta neighbourhood.

2.5. Class management and methodology

Some activities and/or the way to approach them may need to be reconsidered/reshared in the process.

3. Final thought

Victoria: I haven't used the project with my level 2 students yet, but I am planning on doing so, most probably in the third term. I will need to adapt it to meet my students' profiles, their needs, their difficulties, etc. On the other hand, I am already incorporating little bits concerning methodology, such as the use of open questions, rubrics for peer assessment and teachers' evaluation, the use of oral and written inputs to show students what is being requested (exemplar work), podcasts... it is working out very well, but I do need more time to continue working on all these different things.

Final ideas after designing the project/sequence or implementing it.

Lluís: The project in principle sets out to write a biography about a grandparent but also making a description about an object, an heirloom, strongly associated to that grandparent's memory.

Usually the main aspect of a biography is writing. Notwithstanding, the use of digital resources shifts the focus and makes activities more productive and an apparently quote unquote dull activity such as writing a biography becomes more interesting and oriented to fostering oral skills.

As Victoria says it's very important to implement our projects to ascertain if they work or if they need further elaboration. Now comes task of testing our projects if we haven't done that so far.