

PROJECT WORK ON WAR MEMORIALS FOR INTERMEDIATE AND UPPER-
INTERMEDIATE EFL STUDENTS: LINGUISTIC AND EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS

ПРОЕКТНАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ ПО ТЕМЕ «ВОЕННЫЕ ПАМЯТНИКИ» ДЛЯ
СТУДЕНТОВ ЯЗЫКОВОГО ФАКУЛЬТЕТА УНИВЕРСИТЕТА: ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЙ
И ВОСПИТАТЕЛЬНЫЙ АСПЕКТЫ

Anikhovskaya Tatiana
taniho@inbox.ru

Associate Professor
Blagoveshchensk State Pedagogical University

Abstract

The article describes the project carried out by 4th year students of English department, devoted to the 76th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The project involved studying the history of local war memorials and compiling a tourist information sheet in English for those interested in this aspect of Russian history and culture. The article dwells on all stages of the project and highlights linguistic and educational potential of such activities.

Аннотация

В статье описан проект, выполненный студентами факультета иностранных языков БГПУ, посвященный 76-й годовщине победы в Великой Отечественной войне. Проект предполагает изучение истории военных памятников Благовещенска и Амурской области и составление информационной брошюры на английском языке для туристов и всех интересующихся данной темой. В статье рассматриваются все стадии работы над проектом, а также акцентируется внимание на особенностях отбора языкового материала и на воспитательном потенциале подобного вида заданий.

Project work is a popular and effective activity for intermediate and advanced students of English, allowing to emphasize their creativity and independence. One of the basic requirements for any project is relevance and social importance of its theme (3). In this respect the topic of the Great Patriotic war is difficult to overestimate. With so many recent attempts in mass media to diminish the role of the Soviet Union in the victory over fascism, it's time to remind the younger generation about heroism of the defenders of the country and the high price they paid for our peaceful future.

The project "A Carnation in Commemoration" is a part of a course-book "My City: Project Work For Intermediate And Upper-Intermediate EFL Students" currently underway at the department of Foreign Languages in BSPU (1). It is focused on the regional component in teaching English and all activities involve studying and presenting different aspects of local history and culture of Blagoveshchensk and the Amur Region.

The aim of the project "A Carnation in Commemoration", devoted to local war memorials is twofold. The first one is educational: to raise students' awareness about local monuments, to remind them of the importance of commemorating the war heroes. The second is language-oriented: to enable students to speak about history- and culture-related issues. It is designed as an informational practice-oriented project, aimed at collecting information about the monuments, and presenting it to the audience in a processed form. The final product is a tourist brochure consisting of separate information sheets and a presentation about war memorials of Blagoveshchensk and the Amur region. It is meant to be organized as a coordinated short-term

group project with clear-cut individual tasks and functions for each participant. The chief information sources for the project are local mass media and tourist sites.

Linguistic basis for the project has been built up as a result of a prior linguostylistic analysis of war memorials descriptions in English travel guides, travel blogs and tourist reviews, carried out by one of the students of our department (2). It has been established that on the lexical level such descriptions contain a lot of *emotionally coloured adjectives* (moving, significant, impressive, ambitious, breathtaking, majestic, must-see, state-of-art, poignant, beautiful, great, huge, impressive, interesting, sober/sobering, stunning, amazing, awesome, extraordinary, incredible, etc), *adjectives in the superlative degree* (one of the most moving, one of the most poignant, the heaviest, the largest, the most famous, the most striking, the most visited, the tallest), *intensifying words* (very, absolutely, super, definitely, eminently, quite), *cliches connected with military sphere or monument description* (fallen heroes, in tribute to, to shed blood, to make the ultimate sacrifice, to commemorate the battle, to perish in the war, eternal flame, to commemorate the battle, to take its toll), *basic military terms* (anti-aircraft gun, machine gun, counter-attack, artillery, division, trench, battlefield). Syntax of war memorial descriptions depends on the register: it's more formal in travel guides, with lots of lengthy complex and compound sentences, passive voice structures (*Each brick is engraved with a veteran's name, rank, branch and dates of service, and placed around the Soldiers & Sailors Monument in the heart of Indianapolis, ensuring that our heroes will not be forgotten by future generations*), and more expressive in travel blogs and tourist reviews, where short simple sentences, exclamations and imperatives predominate (*The WWI Museum is extraordinary. It delves into the causes of the war. The architecture alone is amazing*) (2).

The work on the project involves the following stages: lead-in: introducing the topic and the vocabulary, project discussion, working on the project, presenting the project, and reflecting on the project.

In the **Lead-in part**, introducing the topic, the students are asked what world-famous war memorials they know and are offered to look at the pictures and say, where the war memorials depicted in them are located, who they commemorate and what feeling these memorials evoke in them. Then students read the descriptions of 8 world-famous memorials (Alyosha Monument in Bulgara, Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Japan , The Monument to the Women of World War II in Great Britain, World War II Valor in the Pacific Monument in the USA, The Motherland Calls in Russia, war memorial "Brest Hero Fortress" in Belarus, Iron shoes on the banks of the Danube River in Hungary and The Soviet Warrior Monument in Germany) and match them with the pictures. The choice of the monuments for this task is supposed to reflect the idea that the Second World War took its toll on all countries and all over the world people pay tribute to their heroes. After reading and matching the students fill the table summarizing the facts they learned:

Name of the memorial	Location	author/ architect/ designer	Size	Opening date

It is followed by the general discussion about the role the war memorials fulfill and why it is important to commemorate war heroes.

An essential part of the lead-in is introducing the active vocabulary for describing war memorials. Students can be asked to study the list and find expressions used in the texts, check and discuss the meaning of other words and expressions and use them answering the questions:

Words referring to the type of monument: memorial, monument, obelisk, sculpture, statue;

Collocations referring to monument opening («открытие, установление памятника»)

to dedicate	}	a monument/memorial/obelisk/statue/sculpture;
To built		
To construct		
To open		
To complete		
To erect		
To establish		
To unveil		

Adjectives referring to the monument size: colossal, enormous, fundamental, giant, huge, imposing, large, massive;

Monument description, elements of the monument: eternal flame, to decorate with, to engrave a name, to inscribe the names, to list the names;

Dedication: in honor of, in memory of, in tribute to, memorial to the fallen heroes/soldiers, a symbol of honor/respect/strength/determination, to commemorate casualties/military personnel/the battle/the soldiers, the history of valour / sacrifice/ the service, to dedicate to veterans/ victory, to pay homage to, to pay respects to, to honor citizens/ defense/ devotion/ the memory/sailors/soldiers/ veterans/the courage, to pay tribute to;

Functions of the monument: to chronicle the war, to connect the past and the present, to contribute to, to depict (scenes from the war, the horrors of war), to educate sb about, to inspire patriotism, to portray (history), to preserve history/ sites and artifacts/ the legacy, to reflect the heroism of people/ the unity, to reinforce the importance, to remind of (the battle), to serve as the final resting place/inspiration, to show respects to, to symbolize the effort / the values of honor /the war/ the warriors;

Adjectives referring to the impressions produced by the moment: amazing, astounding, attractive, awe-inspiring, awesome, beautiful, charming, extraordinary, gorgeous, impactful, impressive, incredible, majestic, memorable, mesmerizing, moving, peaceful, significant, striking, stunning, unforgettable, wonderful;

Feelings evoked by the monument: to be awed, to be grateful for, to be moved, to be struck by, to be worth a visit, to hold a special place in one's heart;

Military terms used in the descriptions of war memorials: ammunition, anti-aircraft gun, armored vehicle, army, artillery, attack, battle against sb, battlefield, battleship, cavalry, civilian personnel, combatant, counter-attack, crewmen, defeat, defense, division, encampment, flagpole, general, gun carriage, home front, infantry, invader (german/fascist), invasion, machine gun, march, marine, military personnel, naval forces, offensive, officer, private soldier, retreat, rifle, shield, siege, tank, to be armed with, trench, troops, warrior, weapon;

Referring to the soldiers and their heroic actions: to be missing in action, to die for, to fall for the motherland, to fight valiantly/ for the country, to fulfill the mission, to give one's life in defense of/ in the service of country, to lay down life for freedom, to lose one's life, to make (the ultimate) sacrifice, to perish in the fight/serving for our country, to remain missing, to shed blood, to withstand the fight.

In the **project discussion** part students concentrate on their native place, naming local war memorials, trying to locate the less known ones shown by the teacher and discussing their history. Finally they are offered to choose one war memorial in their city/town/village they like, bring a carnation flower to it, take a photo of the monument, find out and write down the following information about it: location, author/architect/designer, opening date, the way it looks, brief history of the memorial and their feelings about the place. Students are recommended to use active vocabulary they discussed before and present their story as an information sheet with photos.

Working on a project involves visiting a monument site, taking photos, carrying out individual research and preparing an information sheet. Project coordinator collects all photos and information sheets from the participants and compiles a tourist brochure "War memorials of

Blagoveshchensk/Amur Region” and makes a presentation, containing only photos and brief facts about the monument.

Presenting the project students rely on their information sheets and comment on the slide with ‘their’ monument’ in the collective presentation. Below is an example of an individual information sheet by 4th year student A. Gavrilenko):

Monument to Home Front Workers

The Monument to Home Front Workers is located in Victory Square in the city of Blagoveshchensk. This majestic sculpture was designed by renowned Soviet and Russian sculptor Alexander Burganov. On May 8, 2015, the monument was solemnly unveiled by the Governor of the Amur Region.

The monument is a continuation of the existing stele on the square dedicated to the soldiers of the Great Patriotic War. This large monument, made of stone and granite, depicts the bas-reliefs of the faces of a woman, an elderly man and a teenager, symbolizing the joint efforts of the inhabitants of the country aimed at bringing the end of the war closer. Moreover, on the surface of the monument there are two memorial plates with the inscriptions: *"United by a single will, men and women, children and old people performed a feat in the rear, equal to which history did not know"* and *"Glory to the workers of the rear, who by their heroic labor brought the Day of the Great Victory closer!"*.

This monument was erected in memory of people of all ages who worked in factories and collective farms, and made a significant contribution to the victory of our country in the Great Patriotic War. As for me, this sculpture evokes in me a deep sense of respect and patriotism, as my distant relatives also worked in the collective farm for the glory of the country. Moreover, the touching inscriptions on the memorial plaques allowed me to feel how brave and dedicated the Russian people are!

Finally, **reflecting on the project** and assessing their participation in it, the students are asked whether they find the project relevant, interesting and worth the time spent, they also point out the difficulties they had while doing it and what they gained as a result.

It was really pleasant to learn that most participants expressed their gratitude for the project and its idea, stressing that it gave them the opportunity to discover new places, to learn something new about their hometown, to honor the memory of the heroes, to be creative, and to share their discoveries with others.

Summing everything up, the project carried out by 26 3rd -5th Year students of BSPU covered 22 war memorials not only in Blagoveshchensk, but also in such towns and settlements in the Amur region as Zeya, Belogorsk, Tambovka, Poyarkovo, Arkhara, Raichikhinsk, Svobodny and even the neighbouring Chinese city Heihe with its Monument to the Heroes of the Soviet Army.

The interdisciplinary approach of projects based on the local material enables students to learn more about the place they live in, its history and culture and at the same time to present the landmarks of their native place in English in a proficient way, promoting the city's/town's positive image and making it attractive for foreign visitors. The project “A Carnation in Commemoration” fulfills both of these goals, and, apart from it, has a huge educational potential in forming active citizenship position by encouraging students to pay tribute to the local war heroes.

References:

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