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ABSTRACT

The changing demographics of today's urban schools coupled with the corresponding shortage of bilingual teachers to provide an education for language minority students means that monolingual English teachers will have to carry out content area instruction for students with limited English proficiency (LEP) in the foreseeable future. This paper explores the cultural and linguistic complexity of teaching these students, focusing on the areas of social studies and history. It also provides a rationale for using oral history in classrooms with language minority students, offering examples from an oral history project being carried out with an extended Puerto Rican family to demonstrate the potential for such an approach. The oral history approach allows students to practice their oral skills in both languages, improves writing skills since students need to transcribe the oral tapes and summarize what is important, and enhances their knowledge of historical concepts because they can relate these concepts to real information from their own families or community. (Contains 16 references.) (BT)

Social Studies Content Teaching in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms.

by Irma M. Olmedo

Social Studies Content Teaching in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

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The changing demographics of our urban schools and the corresponding shortage of bilingual teachers to provide an education for language minority students both mean that monolingual English teachers will have to carry out content area instruction for students with limited English proficiency (LEP) for the forseeable future. Not all of these students can be accommodated in established bilingual programs. Even those who have access to English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction may still have to rely on the regular teacher to provide content area instruction if they are to participate in the regular curriculum of the school. Many of these teachers have had no preparation in teaching students whose language is other than English. Many may also have misconceptions about the cognitive capabilities of individuals who do not speak English or who come from minority cultures.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the cultural and linguistic complexity of teaching these students, focusing on the areas of social studies and history, and to provide a rationale for the use of oral history in classrooms with language minority students. Examples of an oral history project being carried out with an extended Puerto Rican family will be used to demonstrate the potential for using such an approach with these students.

Although all areas of the curriculum pose challenges for content area teachers and LEP students, one of the subject areas that poses particular difficulty is social studies, including the history curriculum. Teaching social studies to LEP and ESL students in the U. S. school curriculum is often problematic from both a linguistic and cultural perspective. The linguistic difficulty arises from the need to teach abstract vocabulary which is critical to the understanding of concepts, and which cannot be illustrated in

flashcard fashion. Because social studies textbooks and materials use such abstract vocabulary, teachers are faced with the dilemma of developing comprehensible, illustrative examples for students with limited English skills. Moreover, even though these students may be receiving ESL instruction from a specialist, the content area teachers quickly learn that they themselves need to be active language teachers if the content is to become comprehensible input for the students' concept development.

From a cultural perspective, teaching social studies and history are also difficult because the historical, geographic, and cultural referents may not be part of the background of these students. While teachers of native English speakers in the U.S. can often make certain assumptions about their students' basic knowledge of United States' geography and history, such assumptions cannot be made for the student who is new to the country or whose cultural background is far removed from the mainstream. In those classrooms teachers have to start with real basics, developing the background information and knowledge which will make the curriculum content accessible.

Motivating these students in the study of U.S. history and geography may also create difficulties. Although one would assume that students would find the content of these areas interesting, the reality is that often they do not understand the relevance of history to their own lives or the relationship of historical events to their own community. Many do not see themselves as part of history, or their communities as players on the historical stage. Seixas (1993) decries "the disjunctions between school and families as sources of historical knowledge." (p. 302)

> In a multicultural school population, with students whose families do not share a common historical experience, these disjunctions at best render school history less meaningful, and at worst pose an impediment to students' construction of any meaningful frame of historical reference." (p. 302)

Teachers of history decry the widespread lack of interest in their subject on the part of all students, native English speaking or not. This indifference may in part be explained by the fact that too often history is taught as memorization of isolated facts, rather than an

exploration of concepts and events placed in context. Others recognize that it is difficult for many of our students to identify with important historical events because they are unable to make connections between what happened to people ages ago and what they experience in their own lives.

> Some highly respected historians are even arguing that we should begin to rethink and rewrite American history upwards from the organizational units of families and local communities, rather than downward from a strictly nationalistic perspective (Sitton, 1983, p. 7)

ESL and bilingual students educated in the U.S. also share with native English speaking students inadequacy in geographical and historical learning. International surveys continually show that students in U.S. schools do not know as much as their foreign peers abroad in the area of social studies, especially history and geography. Such survey results have created renewed public pressure for improved teaching of social studies and geography in American schools (Ravitch & Finn,1987).

Controversies between Eurocentric and Afrocentric curriculum advocates have also refocused public attention on the teaching of social studies and complicated the task of the social studies and history teacher. The Eurocentrists argue that western civilization, on which U.S. culture is based, derives its roots from Europe, and that it is that history which is the foundation of American culture. The Afrocentrists counter that the curriculum of U.S. schools is flawed because it does not give adequate recognition to the contributions of Africa and by extension of African-Americans to the creation of modern civilization and U.S. culture.

The focus of immigration into the U.S. has changed considerably within the past decade. "Whereas in the early 1900s at least 85% of immigrants were from Europe, today 85% are from non-European nations" (Nelson, 1993, p. 173). Given these changes and the fact that most new immigrants come neither from Europe nor Africa, the real problem may not be so much between Eurocentric and Afrocentric curricula, but the need for a more "multi-centric" curricular approach. In such an approach, the center would shift, as

teachers attempt to help students see history from many different points of view, including the conflicting points of view of the participants.

Many teachers are rethinking the way the social studies are taught in order to find ways to make the subject more interesting and comprehensible to students and to help such students delve into the conflicting perspectives of participants in historical struggles (Kivig & Marty, 1982; Seixas, 1993). This rethinking involves recognition of the need to relate the curriculum to the lives of their students and thereby to build bridges beween the home and the school, the community and the curriculum. One way of doing this is to help students understand that history is filled with stories. Narratives can make history come alive for students with limited English proficiency, who come from ethnically diverse households and communities. Moreover, they serve to bring the experiences of these families and communities into the center. One way to help students construct these narratives is to employ oral history as an approach with LEP and ESL students. In this way teachers can "bring history home" and help students understand that history is not just something that happened long and and now lives only in their textbooks (Sitton, 1983).

Using oral history with students is not new.

> The Greek historian Herodotus, the so-called father of history, worked mainly with the personal recollections of living participants in the events he described. In pereliterate societies (and in the preliterate antecedents of our own society) history was oral tradition, held only in living memory and passed down from generation to generation in narrative, folktale, ballad, and epic verse (Sitton, p. 5).

There are some national projects, such as the Foxfire project, which are built on having students undertake oral history with their families or communities (Wigginton, 1985). Throughout the country centers have sprung up to encourage this approach in public schools and to assist teachers in implementing oral history projects in their classrooms. A project in Cleveland, the Bridges project, had students engage in oral history by interviewing older relatives or members of the children's communities. Two volumes of the interviews were published in 1991 and 1992 to record abstracts of these oral histories. The Cambridge Oral History Center has engaged in a variety of projects in which oral

histories of various communities are being carried out. Some of these projects have led to the writing of curricula for public school teachers who decide to undertake such a project in their classrooms (Cohen, 1988)

Oral History: Towards a Definition

Oral history is historical inquiry which is undertaken by interviewing individuals either about their past or events which they experienced. According to Seixas (1993), teaching history involves consideration of historical epistemology, agency, empathy and moral judgment. Epistemology refers to the "students' ability to refine, revise, and add to their picture of history, either through new evidence or through reliance on historical authorities (p. 303)

> "Historical agency implies that people in the past faced choices, that they made decisions, and that the resulting actions had consequences...the notion of historical agency is necessary for conceptualizing people's interactions with the social and cultural circumstances in which they found themselves. Without this tool, students cannot see themselves as operating in the same realm as the historical figures whom they are studying and thus cannot make meaning of history. Students who exercise historical empathy understand historical figures as agents who faced decisions, conflicts, constraints, and hardships under cirumstances and with ways of thinking quite different from their own. " p. 303.

One way to have students understand historical epistemology, agency, empathy and moral judgment is to have them actually do history. This is the main objective of a classroom oral history project. At the pedagogical level, this entails helping them select a workable topic, develop questioning and interviewing strategies, generate hypotheses and decide what evidence is needed to test them, make generalizations from data or the interviews, make judgments about the point of view of the sources being interviewed, analyze, synthesize and evaluate the information. Oral history interviews can also be supplemented with secondary sources so that students have an opportunity to compare and contrast primary and secondary sources. All the above are skills employed by historians as they do their own work. All of these are also skills that teachers try to promote across the curriculum, not just in history. Therefore, oral history projects are legitimate ways of addressing the objectives of the curriculum of our elementary and secondary schools while

students are involved in constructing narratives and histories based on the experiences of their families or members of their community.

But oral history has an additional important meaning for educators who work in multilingual and multicultural settings. It permits students to view history from the bottom up rather than top down. In other words, they start from the perspective of individuals, families, and communities. It broadens the scope of the historical record by giving attention to the excluded, the communities from which many of these immigrant students come. This type of history can explore the perspectives of members of ethnic groups and communities who have lost out and been dislocated by the wars that they have suffered. Frequently the history recorded in textbooks is written from the perspective of the winners. Oral histories, on the contrary, can tap the perspectives of participants who are the primary sources for the stories.

Many oral histories also tend to focus on everyday life. The study of everyday life can shed a great deal of light on how communities organize themselves, how they deal with the challenges of raising families, making a living, and building community. History is therefore not a series of battles and wars, a litany of governments overthrown, kingdoms established and demolished. Though these events in history should not be overlooked, the question is one of focus and sequence, how to get students to that point in their inquiry. Seixas (1993), in a study of adolescents' understanding of history states,

> "Our fund of historical knowledge provides material for comparisons and analogies, for 'lessons' from the past that help us define the meaning of the present and place ourselves in historical time. We use the past to contextualize all aspects of the present." p. 301

Oral history also emphasizes the value of biography. When a student is interviewing a grandparent, this interviewee is telling his life story. Suddenly what could be a dull recitation of names, dates, and places comes alive because it is a story of a young person growing up into adulthood, perhaps dealing with conflicts somewhat similar to the youth of today but in different circumstances.

Oral history approaches highlight history as process. How does the historian find out what really happened, sort through conflicting evidence, reach conclusions? Oral history can enhance the written history that is found in our texts. It might offer another point of view, it might elicit empathy on the part of the interviewer, it challenges detachment and engages the interviewer and interviewee in constructing their own historical record. It can help students raise questions about what constitutes adequte historical evidence. It promotes the value of considering multiple sources for any event.

Rationale for an Oral History Approach

All good pedagogy is based on the assumption that new concepts should be built on what the student already knows. As educators in the social studies continue to urge teachers to focus on concepts rather than isolated facts, teachers need to explore new ways of teaching these concepts, making them as relevant as possible to students (National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Scope and Sequence, 1989). Oral history can strengthen the learning of new concepts by creating a context for such learning. For example, as a context for studying the colonial period in American history, students can explore the reasons why their own family came to America and formed a community. Concepts such as religious persecution, tyranny of autocratic rulers, and rights and responsibilities of self-governance can become more comprehensible if examples can be developed from the experiences of the students' own families and communities. Oral history approaches provide teachers with opportunities to develop parallels between the history of our country and its people, and those of the ESL and bilingual students and their community.

Many ESL and bilingual students live near or with grandparents and even great grandparents. These students may not appreciate the wealth of historical experience their own relatives have which can be related to other historical events studied in their school curriculum. In reviewing a video tape of an oral history interview made with a grandfather, several teens wondered aloud how this gentleman who had had so little education knew so

much about the Second World War and the Japanese. They had not understood that World War II had occurred while the grandfather was a teenager, and that many of his peers had served in the military during the war. These young people had no conception of historical timelines. By using examples from the students' family histories, the teacher can introduce social studies concepts in a way that is relevant and meaningful for the students.

Teachers who have these students in their classes recognize the importance of developing the oral skills. Teachers need to provide many opportunities for these students to listen and speak, using natural language wherever possible. Oral history is an ideal way to focus on the oral skills since students have to use these skills in the interview process and to present the information to their classmates. In addition, literacy skills can also be enhanced when students translate the oral interviews or abstract from them what is most valuable for sharing with others in the class. They need to identify main idea, supporting details, and critical examples as they go about developing their presentations. These are language and literacy skills which all teachers want to develop in their students. And they are no less important for the ESL and bilingual student. Moreover, since students need to use their native language to conduct the interviews, an oral history project provides a legitimate role for the native language without necessarily dedicating actual classroom time to it as would be the case within a bilingual classroom.

Probably one of the most difficult tasks of teachers working with ESL and LEP students is identifying strategies for giving parents a legitimate role in their children's education. Having students participate in oral history projects in which they have to interview a parent, grandparent, or other relative or member of the community, is a natural way of validating their family's experience, as teachers capitalize on the wealth of knowledge that members of the community may possess. Moreover, this is also a way of promoting a dialogue across the generations. In an oral history interview between a daughter and her mother, the mother discussed the fact that her own mother had owned a clothing bazaar in Puerto Rico during the 20's when the mother was a child. This anecdote

helped the daughter appreciate something which she never knew about her ancestors, the fact that they were business people, rather enterprising, at a time when many people on the island were very poor. All of a sudden the history of the depression took on a new meaning, as she learned why her mother was not able to continue her own schooling and what happened to the family's fortunes as a result of world wide economic dislocations during the depression. The stories her mother told could have served as a context for this daughter's own understanding of the depression.

As teachers validate the life experiences of families, they also enhance the self-concept of students. Students learn that their families have something worth sharing with mainstream culture. They are able to recognize both the common characteristics that they share with other ethnic groups, as well as the uniqueness of their own family and ethnic group.

Oral history approaches provide excellent opportunities to employ cooperative learning activities which can be of critical value with ESL students from both a linguistic and cultural perspective. From a linguistic viewpoint, it allows students to practice their spoken English in a smaller, less risk-laden environment, and it maximizes the opportunities for verbal interaction among groups. Cooperative learning groups can also be valuable from a cultural perspective. Research shows that some cultural groups function more effectively in a cooperative rather than competitive environment (Philips, 1982; Kagan, 1986). For students from those groups, opportunities for such classroom cooperation can enhance their learning and participation. The monolingual English speaking teacher may be able to capitalize on the presence of more than one student from a particular linguistic group in the classroom by developing cooperative learning groups to conduct a project. In such groups, students can work together to focus on the commonalities and diversity which exist in the group itself. Or cooperative groups can be formed with students from different backgrounds, whereby group members have to identify similarities and differences of groups based on the oral history interviews.

An Oral History Case Study

An example of an oral history project begun with an extended Puerto Rican family shows the potential value of this approach for engaging LEP students in historical inquiry. This project has been undertaken by the presenter as a preliminary for training teachers wanting to pursue similar projects with their students. Audio and video-taped interviews were carried out with five family members across two generations, three sisters, a brother and a son. The main focus of the interviews was on the three grandmothers aged 86, 82 and 65. These women, sisters, were born in Puerto Rico, and were raised in an environment of extreme poverty on the island. Two of them migrated to the mainland in 1945 and participated in a three way migration by returning to the island to resettle in the 60's and resettling back on the mainland in the 80's. One direction of the research has been to explore the role these women and others of their network played in the migration process to the mainland, and their contribution in the establishment of community.

The women were asked questions about the life of their mother and grandmother, thus tracing their story back to the middle of the 19th century when Puerto Rico was under the control of Spain. The following quotes are taken from these interviews:

--"Did grandma ever tell you what the life of her parents and grandparents was like?"

--"She used to tell me that when theSpaniards were in Puerto Rico many lived in fear."

--"Who lived in fear?"

--"The Puerto Ricans, because they used to say that if you walked out at night, the Spaniards would ask, "who goes there?' and you would have to answer by giving your name because if you did not answer you would be shot. That's what my mother used to tell me. That you had to answer quickly."

The topic of colonialism is one of those covered in the history and social studies curriculum. How does colonialism affect individuals in their everyday life? What impact

does the control of one people by another have on the colonized? An example like the anecdote above can be used as a springboard to discuss the nature and impact of colonialism on the dominated populations. Students who come from societies or ethnic groups with colonial structures would be able to add more dramatic examples from even more recent history.

The grandmothers were interviewed about their own childhood at the beginning of the 20th century:

--"How about if we talk about the period between 1905 and 1930, when you were children. How did you manage?"

--"Well, father worked on the sugar cane fields...they sent us to school for only a few years. The situation was very poor. It was bad all over. There was a great deal of poverty. People would work for a few days. They would get paid a little over a dollar a day."

This was a period when Puerto Rico had become a possession of the U.S. as a result of the Spanish American War. The Puerto Rican economy became dependent on one crop, sugarcane. This was also the period preceding the Great Depression. Anecdotes from the oral history interviews can be used to capture both the economic reality for the country and for individual families. In addition, the personal narrative serves as a context for the understanding of timelines.

Some societies have an elder whose judgment is trusted, whose advice is sought, who takes a leadership position to protect and advance the clan. Although we may occasionally imagine such an elder as part of a primitive clan or society, one of the women interviewed in this family played just such a role. Her name was dona Goyita. At the time of the last interview she was 82 years old. She was born around 1910 in Puerto Rico, the third offspring of a couple with 14 children, 4 of whom died in childbirth or infancy. Their reality was typical of many Puerto Ricans at the beginning of the century. Formal education was difficult to secure in this environment. The daughters were either not

provided with this opportunity and when they were, it was limited to 2-3 years of schooling, enough for basic literacy and arithmetic. When dona Goyita was quite young, she was placed as a servant with another family. She was taught to sew and do fine needlework, training which she considered to be her good fortune because it was this skill that helped her eventually to raise her children and get employment in New York.

Dona Goyita married and had three children. Since her husband was employed, she became a second mother to many of her younger sisters and brothers, who came to live with her during various periods of their own lives. While she was single and later after marrying, she supplemented the family income by sewing, at first by hand and later by machine. This way of earning an income was fairly common for women on the island, as is documented by several studies of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies in New York:

> "P.R. women's role in capitalist production dates back to the early decades of the century, when thousands of women and young girls were brought into wage labor as hand needleworkers, sewing and embroidering ...for North American clothing manufacturers." (Benmayor, et. al. 1987, p. 6)

Students can supplement the oral history narratives with readings in secondary sources. When pursued from this vantage point, library research takes on a more meaningful purpose. Exploration into secondary sources is thus triggered by a real curiosity and need to find out to what extent the narrative of individuals interviewed is supported by the work of other "professional" historians and to what extent the experiences of the interviewee were unique or part of a pattern for other contemporaries.

Dona Goyita became a widow at age 27 with three small children and a young teenage brother and sister for whom to care. She struggled working at her sewing, placed her brother as an apprentice to a cabinetmaker, and continued to try to raise her children. She was able to get a job in one of the sewing factories which were starting to open on the island. In addition, she supplemented this income by sewing at home, often until the early hours of the morning, for very little pay. Since the income was very low, she decided to migrate to New York in 1945. As dona Goyita explained:

> "I worked in a factory basement, in a garment shop...the women began to leave the shop. They wanted to go to New York to make more money...Everyone was leaving...people wanted to improve their lot. I was earning $18 a week as a seamstress on the island, and I could make a lot more money in New York. It was too little, what one earned."

Immigration into the U.S. is an important topic in the history and social studies curriculum. This is one topic where educators in a multiethnic environment can best capitalize on the background of students to make facts and concepts related to this theme come alive. Moreover, if there is a diversity of backgrounds represented in the classroom, opportunities exist to have students compare and contrast the experiences of the various groups, and individuals and families within these groups.

The prospect of economic advancement on the mainland was a necessary condition for the migration for dona Goyita's family but it was not a sufficient condition. For many Puerto Ricans the initial decision to migrate to the mainland at that time was dependent on the presence of a supporting relative on the mainland. Dona Goyita was helped in the migration by the presence of an aunt and two female cousins who had already settled in New York.

> "I had Irma and Luisa and Goya (in New York) and Pichile. For quite a while Luisa had been encouraging me to come (to NY). So I made the decision and I went."

One aspect of the process of establishing community was the critical role that the extended family played in all aspects of the life of each family member. Whereas the word "family" generally means the nuclear family to Americans on the mainland, it often refers to the extended family within the Puerto Rican community. In the process of the migration the extended family provided the security for those who made the migration, and then became the initial source for employment assistance, housing assistance, economic, and social support.

> "When I left for N.Y. I had my sister Benita in my house and my other sister Milady. They stayed with my children. I left them with the intention of bringing them soon, but it took me five months to bring them. It was hard to find apartments."

One characteristics of the migration of this extended family was the domino effect of one migration on others. Five months after finding a job and an apartment in 1945, dona Goyita brought her children and sister. In 1951, she brought another sister, her sister's husband and three children. One year later, these two sisters brought a brother and his family. Four years later, these two sisters and brother brought their elderly parents and three unmarried siblings to live with family members already established in New York. This process was repeated during the late 1950's when nine adult nieces and nephews were brought to New York, sharing apartments with the aunts and uncles until they are able to get jobs and establish themselves.

In the interviews, one of the sisters, Milady, highlights this dependence on family.

> "...the Puerto Rican family always sought to be together. We always got together on the holidays to share, always share together. We always thought about helping each other. We always had that belief. I don't think that American families are as united. We look out for each other."

Since the social studies curriculum is not only about how nations are formed, it is appropriate to explore these family life stories to understand how communities are formed. Moreover, individual students can relate to the hardships that ancestors had in migrating and then reestablishing their families and communities in a new environment. In addition, the narratives of various students across ethnic groups can be used to explore similarities and differences faced by immigrant groups across different periods of time.

Moll and Greenberg (1990) in their study of the funds of knowledge of Mexican American households in the Southwest write about the sociocultural practice called "confianza".

> "This term refers to reciprocal exchange relations that form social networks among households...the networks facilitate different forms of economic assistance and labor cooperation that help families avoid the expenses involved in using secondary institutions...these networks form social contexts for the transmission of knowledge, skills, and information as well as cultural values and norms" (P. 321).

One way that this "confianza" or mutual trust was demonstrated within this extended Puerto Rican family was in the formation of *la sociedad*. *La sociedad* was a creative approach for dealing with one of the difficulties of the times, the need for cash and

the lack of availability of credit. The way *la sociedad* worked was as follows. If a member of the family needed $100 to buy furniture, for example, 10 family members would get together to form a sociedad. Each family would contribute $10 a week for 10 weeks, and each week one of the families would receive the $100 kitty. This was a kind of mutual aid society developed within the extended family network but occasionally including non-family members who became so accepted into the network that they could be trusted to participate. It was a homemade alternative for dealing with cash needs without resorting to banks or credit granting institutions. Dona Goyita and other women organized *la sociedad*. The women became the informal bankers in *La Sociedad*, making decisions as to who could be trusted to participate, developing the logistics of how it would work, and insuring that each member fulfilled his/her part in the agreement. The system worked because of the closeness and trust that existed within the family network and others that were included for similar reasons.

The structure of *La Sociedad* provides support for the concept of historical agency. Individuals and families were able to make decisions and sometimes found creative approaches to survive in the new enviromment. They were not merely victims of economic forces around them, but took initiatives to affect their circumstances.

If students were relying merely on textbooks for their learning about Puerto Ricans, they would learn that Puerto Rico is part of the United States, that Puerto Ricans are citizens, that P.R. is close to the mainland. They might read about factors explaining the difference between Puerto Rican migrants and other immigrants (Fitzpatrick 1971; Wagenheim, 1975; Morales, 1986). Scholars in the areas of economics and political science concentrate on the "push factors" which have led to the migration from the island to the mainland, especially the high unemployment on the island in part caused by the relationship to the U.S. economy. Such researchers establish a relationship between the employment situation on the island and the mainland and the waves of migration back and forth (Morales,1986; Melendez, 1991). Scholars of the Puerto Rican reality also make

reference to the unique relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States to explain the migration to the mainland. Since Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States, policies regarding labor and the economy were instituted which made it necessary for many Puerto Ricans to migrate to the mainland. In addition, historically after the Second World War there were efforts on the part of American employers to recruit labor in P.R. All of this content is important if students are to understand the "bigger" picture of history. But it misses a vital component of living history, the story of those who were part of this process, the personal decisions that they made to affect their circumstances.

> "When my sister went to N. Y. she sought to bring us with her. Her parents and all of us. And we went. All of us. Then when she returned to Puerto Rico, it was the same. Then we all returned. Then from Puerto Rico here it was the same, to Orlando. She came and then the rest of us followed."

If history and social studies are about what happened to real people in the process of living out their lives and confronting the reality of conflicts with their environment, whether physical, political, economic or social, the narratives of the families of our students can provide a rich resource for enhancing the teaching of social studies.

As the previous examples show, there are a variety of concepts which social studies and history teachers can teach using oral history narratives as a scaffold or context for such content learning. From just this one narrative, concepts related to colonialism and reasons why people seek independence can be highlighted by the example of the fear that families lived in during the time of the Spaniards. Concepts related to economics, how people made a living in a variety of systems can be exemplified by the discussion of the grandfather's employment as a "jornalero" or day laborer, the discussion of dona Goyita working in a factory as well as at home to supplement the family income, and the brother becoming an apprentice to learn a trade. Concepts related to the topic of migration can be supported with the oral history quotes of why people were leaving the island. Of course students whose families were fleeing political or religious persecution could cite even more powerful examples which can make discussion of the European settlement of America and the large

migrations of the 19th and 20th century more compelling than the lists of reasons which might be included in a textbook. Teachers can use a variety of examples from the oral histories to highlight or reinforce these concepts as well as topics such as economic change, labor union movements, government programs, geography, issues of war and peace, forms of government, and many others.

Summary

The monolingual English speaking teacher is confronted with the challenge of teaching content area in social studies and history to limited English proficient students, motivating them by pointing to the relationship between these subjects and the reality of their own families and communities, and helping them to understand what it means to do history. Using oral history approaches with these students can have many valuable outcomes. Students are able to practice their oral skills in both languages since both are needed to carry out the project and present it to their classmates. Writing skills are also improved since students need to transcribe the oral tapes and summarize what is important, selecting the main idea and supporting details. Students can improve their knowledge of historical concepts because they can relate these concepts to real information from their own families or community. They learn to analyze raw data, abstract what is important or relevant for developing a narrative, begin to understand patterns, compare and contrast their experiences with those of others, and carry out research with reference materials to broaden their understanding of events referred to in the interviews. Their self-concept is enhanced as they understand that the experiences of their family and ethnic community have a legitimate place in the school curriculum.

Historians sometimes have opportunities to use raw data of events as they happen such as interviews with the participants in the events. Students need to understand that the history of the 90's is occurring right now as people live these times. One hundred years from now children will be learning about the various ethnic groups that settled in the U.S., how they lived, what they experienced, and how the U.S. was changed as a result of their

presence. Students need to understand that history is a dynamic process, that can be written from many different perspectives. The diversity of their backgrounds is an asset. They can become junior historians of their own communities and their ethnic group at the same time that they develop and improve their English language and literacy skills.

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