

# Using Local Business Interviews to Enhance English Skills

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Engaging students in real-world tasks can greatly improve their language skills and boost their confidence. This lesson plan introduces a semester-long project designed for Japanese university students learning English. The project involves interviewing local business owners/managers, writing an essay about the interview, and delivering a final presentation. It focuses on developing practical communication, writing, and presentation skills while fostering personal growth and local knowledge of Shimane Prefecture.

## Project Overview

Students begin by interviewing a local business owner or manager to gather information using three key questions:

1. What kind of business is this?
2. What product(s) does this business sell?
3. Where can the product(s) be purchased?

They are encouraged to ask additional questions to better understand the business's operations and challenges.

## Preparation

For students to succeed in this assignment, it is necessary to dedicate time in class explaining and preparing students for the interview process. Activities such as role-playing interviews, brainstorming, and essay writing are often necessary for many students. Also, by doing this, students can improve their English using feedback from their peers.

## Presentation

At the end of the semester, all students must deliver a four-minute presentation. They summarize the business and the product, talk about their experiences, and reflect on the project's challenges. This task strengthens their public speaking skills and builds confidence in presenting ideas in English.

## Benefits

This project bridges the gap between classroom learning and the real world by combining interviews, writing, and presentations. Through this project, students gain practical language skills and learn to express themselves effectively in an academic setting. My personal experience with this project has shown that it promotes linguistic and personal development as well as knowledge of the local area.

## Lesson Plan: Interviewing Local Businesses (Love. Local. Shimane.)

### Objectives

1. Develop communication skills through real-life interaction in English.

2. Gain experience conducting interviews and gathering information.
3. Practice essay writing and improve organizational skills.
4. Enhance presentation abilities.

## **Lesson Overview (To be carried out over the course an academic semester)**

### **1. Introduction**

Objective: Set the context and explain the assignments.

Activities:

Briefly discuss local businesses and their importance in the community.

Explain the task: Students will interview local business owners or managers and collect information using three key questions:

1. What kind of business is this?
2. What products does this business sell?
3. Where can the products be purchased?

Highlight the final requirements:

- Write a 1-page essay about the business and why it was chosen.
- Deliver a 4-minute presentation about the business and their experience at the end of the semester.

### **2. Preparatory Activities**

Objective: Equip students with the skills and confidence to conduct interviews.

Activities:

1. Practice Asking Questions:

- Role-play with a partner: One student acts as the business owner, and the other as the interviewer.
- Use the three required questions and encourage additional questions.
- Provide feedback on students' performance.

2. Brainstorming Session:

- Students list and discuss local businesses they are interested in interviewing.
- Share reasons for their choices to generate ideas.

### **3. Planning and Writing Tips**

Objective: Help students structure their essays.

Activities:

Teach the basic structure of the essay:

1. Introduction: Introduce the business and reason for choosing it.
2. Body: Describe the business based on the interview answers.

3. Conclusion: Reflect on the experience and personal insights.

Provide examples of clear, concise sentences and transition phrases. Use examples from previous years if available.

#### **4. Major Assignments**

Task: Conduct the interview and write a 1-page essay.

Submission Date: roughly 2 weeks from the assigned date.

Follow-Up Activities

Mid-Semester Check-In:

- Students share updates about their interviews and receive feedback on their essay drafts.

Final Presentations:

Each student gives a 4-minute presentation:

- Overview of the business and its operations.
- Reflection on the process and their personal experience.

#### **Grading Criteria**

1. Essay:

- Content and accuracy of information
- Grammar, vocabulary, and coherence
- Personal insight and reflection

2. Presentation:

- Clarity and organization of Presentation and PowerPoint (or some similar software)
- Speaking skills (memorization, fluency, and grammar)
- Reflection and personal insights

Reflection for Instructors

After the semester, gather feedback from students about the project and adjust for future iterations.

Consider showcasing the best essays and presentations to inspire future students.