Activity: Comparing past and present: Talking to people of varying ages

In the 'stories' section you can hear older speakers talk about their leisure time and holidays when they were younger.

Find an older, middle aged and younger person and ask them about their holiday and leisure experiences. For the older and middle aged person, this should be when they were younger people.

Record these interviews (if the people are willing).

It may be possible to donate your recordings. If you would like to do so (ask the speaker's permission first) then please contact us for more information. Contact details are on the 'Sounds of the City' website.

Write a short paragraph describing or talk about whom you chose and the similarities and differences in their holiday and leisure experiences.

Here are some questions you could ask (you can also think of your own). If you are not recording, you or the older person could also write down their answers.

1. What is your name?
2. Where were you born?
3. When were you born?
4. (For the adults) How much spare time did you have as a youngster?
5. (For the young person) How much spare time do you have every week?
6. (for the adults)What kind of things did you like to do in your spare time when you were a child and then a teenager?
    a. Try to get a lot of detail about the things they did, e.g. if they played games ask what kind of games.
7. (for the young person) What kind of things do you like to do in your spare time? What things did you like to do when you were younger?
8. (For the adults) Where did you go on holiday as a child and then as a teenager and what did you do there? Who did you go with?
9. (For the young person) Where have you been on holiday? Who did you go with? What did you do?
10. What is your favourite film?
11. (for the adults) What kind of job did you want to do before you started work?
12. (for the youngster) What kind of job would you like to do?
13. Find out what kinds of music the adult speakers listened to as youngsters and what the young person listens to now (and what other young people listen to now).

Here are some things to think about when writing your passage, or talking about what you have found:

In what way do these people speak differently to each other and to you?

Why could this be? Age? Do they come from somewhere different to where you come from?

In what way are their experiences different to each other and to yours? What strikes you as the biggest differences between being a young person at these different points in time?

More information:

This activity has been worded in such a way that younger people not yet able to read and write competently can also carry it out with the help of an adult. It introduces fieldwork and allows the student to think about how people of varying ages may speak differently.

How people of varying ages interviewed at the same time, speak differently both in terms of pronunciation and content, is of great interest to linguists. Using age as a substitute for the passage of time when looking at language change is called looking at apparent-time change.