

Using Brochures in the LCTL Classroom

Sample Lesson Plan Overview

Levels: Beginning-advanced

Aims: Practice skimming for information; reinforce key vocabulary; call attention to grammatical patterns; practice requests for information

Class Time: Variable (30 min-several class periods)

Preparation Time: Variable (20 min-1 hr.)

Resources: Brochures, activity-related materials (handouts, poster, overhead, etc.)

Brochures pervade almost all aspects of our lives. We look at them in doctors' waiting offices, pick them up at travel agencies or airports when we travel, request them from educational institutions when enrolling in courses, receive them (unsolicited) in the mail, etc. Although we tend to often view brochures as a nuisance, they remain an important source of information. In fact, comparing the information in brochures is one of the main ways we arrive at decisions about which services are the best given our needs. Armed with carefully selected brochures, the teacher of LCTLs can easily transform the authentic activity of comparing brochure copy into a useful, pedagogical task.

The following two lesson plans exemplify ways in which brochures can be used to achieve specific language teaching objectives.

- **A place to rest our weary heads—Selecting accommodations using hotel brochures**
- **Getting down to the basics – Determining key information from medical brochures**

A place to rest our weary heads—Selecting accommodations using hotel brochures

Level: Beginning to low-intermediate

Aims: Scan for specific information; make decisions based on comparison of data

Class time: 30 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resources: Class sets of hotel brochures, preferably with pictures; handout (see appendix); overhead transparency of the blank information table

Being caught in a foreign city with no accommodations can be a frustrating experience. For this reason, travelers frequently plan in advance where to stay and book their accommodations in advance, either by telephone or (increasingly today) via the Internet. Hotel brochures (available through travel agents or at airport hotel desks) provide travelers with important information on which to base their decisions. In this activity, students scan assembled hotel brochures and arrive at a group decision where to stay in a foreign city.

Procedures:

1. Before class, do the following:
 - a. Locate a variety of hotel brochures for a given city in the target country. Try to find brochures in the LCTL that do not contain a translation into English. See Caveats and Options 5 if these are unavailable.
 - b. Prepare enough copies of the brochures to distribute sets to groups of 3-4 students.
2. Ask students what kind of planning they do when they travel to a foreign city. Do they consult a travel agent? Write for travel information? Consult the Internet? Etc.
3. Brainstorm with them what features they typically look for when they make hotel reservations. List the information you elicit on the board.
4. Instruct students that the activity they are about to do concerns reading hotel brochures, filling out an information table with comparison data, and making a decision where to stay in a foreign city. Tell them they will have 10 minutes to complete the activity and should be prepared to present their decision to the rest of the class.
5. Put students into groups of 3-4. Give each group a set of hotel brochures and a copy of the appendix.
6. After 10 minutes (or when students have finished), ask for volunteers from different groups to come up to the overhead projector and fill in the blank information in the columns.

7. Ask other groups if they want to add additional information or if they disagree with what has been presented.
8. Ask groups which hotel they decided to stay in and why.
9. For homework, ask students to locate 2-3 hotels in the target country that have Internet sites. Ask them to print out the information and come prepared to class to make a brief report on their findings. (Optional)

Caveats and Options:

1. If no overhead projector is available, the teacher can reproduce a blank information table on the blackboard while students are busy working in their groups.
2. Since brochures are readily available, it is a good practice to collect enough of any given brochure to compile a class set. This saves on copying costs and also has the advantage of appearing more authentic to students.
3. Besides hotels, any number of other brochure types also work equally well (malls, restaurants, nail salons, massage parlors).
4. In lieu of brochures, you can also have students search the Web to find relevant information sites. Directions for the activity and links to the various hotels can be posted to the class webpage.
5. To make the activity more interesting, teachers can give different “identities” to each group. For example, “You are a group of businessmen who are only staying the night in the city before departing for your next appointment. You prefer a hotel near the airport.” In this option, students will also have to provide a rationale for why this hotel was best for their group.
6. Many brochures may be written in English as well as in the LCTL since brochures are often produced with tourists in mind. In this case, you may wish to give the students copies with the English translation deleted. Alternatively, for advanced students you may wish to have them comment on the translation and/or locate portions of the original text that were not included in the English translation.

Appendix

Directions: For each hotel brochure, fill in the missing information. An example is provided.

Hotel Name	<i>The Mayflower Hotel</i>	Hotel A	Hotel B	Etc.
Address	<i>Yafet St., Hamra Beirut</i>			
Contact #s	<i>T: 961 1 340680 F: 961 1 342038 mayflo@dm.net.lb</i>			
Room Rates	<i>\$US 65-120</i>			
Size	<i>85 guest rooms/suites</i>			
Special services:	<i>Tours, car rental, on call doctor, currency exchange</i>			
Amenities	<i>Rooftop pool; Duke of Wellington English pub; restaurant; guest access to the St. Georges private beach club</i>			
Location	<i>In Hamra shopping district close to the cornice area and the American University of Beirut</i>			

Getting down to the basics—Determining key information from medical brochures

Level: Beginning to low-intermediate

Aims: Become acquainted with target-culture norms for educating the public about health related issues, learn related grammatical forms and vocabulary; make requests for information

Class time: 30 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resources: Brochures, preferably with pictures

Health agencies often publish informational brochures on health-related topics (e.g., exercise, nutrition, specific conditions or diseases) in the belief that health concerns can be addressed through education. What makes these brochures particularly attractive for language teaching purposes is that they are concisely written (i.e., tending to focus on only the most important aspects of the topic) and are often accompanied by clear illustrations to help the reader better understand the issues. They may also make repeated use of certain grammatical features (e.g., imperatives, information questions) that can be targeted for instruction. In this activity, medical brochures are used to help students learn how to make requests in a medical setting.

Procedure:

1. Before class, locate brochures (e.g. from public health services) on a range of health topics
2. In class, set up the brochures around the room. Put students in small groups (2-4) and have them go around the room looking at the brochures trying to deduce the topic of each brochure. (see appendix for worksheet)
3. Present vocabulary covering the topics of the brochures. Presenting the brochures one at a time, call on different students to practice the vocabulary with the sentence, “This is a brochure about _____.”
4. Present the parts of a dialogue needed to acquire a brochure.
 - a. “How may I help you?”
 - b. “Are you looking for information about _____ ?”
 - c. “Do you have a brochure about _____ ?”
 - d. “Yes, I need information about _____.”
5. In their groups, have students write a dialogue or create a role play in which a person seeks information about a specific topic.

Caveats and Options:

1. In lieu of brochures, you can also have students search the Web to find relevant medical information sites.
2. The more extralinguistic cues there are, the easier it will be for students in the first part of the exercise to determine the content of the brochure. However, even with a small vocabulary, students may be able to deduce the topic.
3. You may also have the students discuss the possible target audience of the brochure (e.g., pregnant women, farmers, urban dwellers, children, etc.).

Acknowledgments:

This lesson plan was inspired by Tom Griggs.

Appendix

Brochure	Guess the topic	Reason for the guess
A		
B		
C		