Using Transportation Schedules in the LCTL Classroom

Sample Lesson Plan Overview

Levels: Beginning-advanced

Aims: Learn to tell time; become acquainted with geography; deduce information about major cities and attractions; plan a trip

Class Time: 30 minutes-several class periods

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Resources: Transportation schedule (e.g., bus, train, airline, boat); area map; slips of paper; handout

Transportation schedules offer a wide variety of language teaching possibilities, including (but not limited to) teaching students how to tell time, acquainting them with the geography of the country, and providing practice asking for and giving directions. In conjunction with other travel information (maps, travel brochures), transportation schedules can provide the raw materials for an extended class project involving planning a trip, writing a travel journal, and the like.

The following two interactive lessons present concrete suggestions for using travel brochures in the LCTL classroom.

- The train leaves at 10:34 - Practicing telling time with schedules
- A weekend off – Planning a trip with a transportation schedule and map
The train leaves at 10:34 - Practicing telling time with schedules

Level: Beginning-intermediate

Aims: Practice telling time

Class time: 30-40 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resources: Transportation schedule; overhead transparency; slips of paper

In the language classroom, we often encounter learners whose aim is to travel to the country in which the target language is spoken. What activity could prepare them better for such travel than working with transportation schedules? In this motivating activity, students practice working with a transportation schedule to formulate information questions. They then share their questions with peers, whose responsibility it is to answer the questions based on the information provided in the transportation schedule.

Procedure:
1. Before class, locate a transportation schedule. Make a class set and an overhead transparency.
2. Using the overhead transparency, model how to read the schedule, pointing out relevant vocabulary (e.g. departure, arrival, ticket, platform, etc.)
3. Present how to ask and answer the questions, e.g.,
   a. What time does the train arrive in Baku? [It arrives at 9:45 pm.]
   b. When does the plane arrive in Beijing? [It arrives at half past 8 in the morning.]
   c. What time does the ticket office open? [It opens at 7 am.]
4. Pair students and give them a schedule. Give each pair three slips of paper and ask them to write three of their own questions asking for a time from the schedule.
5. Collect and mix the slips of paper up; then redistribute the questions to the groups. Have students orally ask and answer the questions using the schedule.
6. Have some pairs present their questions and answers to the class.
7. Provide feedback on language accuracy.

Caveats and Options:
1. Transportation schedules are free and readily available in airports, train stations, etc. When travelling, consider collecting class sets to keep on hand for future classroom use.
2. Because schedules often assume that the user already knows the geography covered, it may be helpful to have a map of the area available for reference.
3. Prepositional use with time telling is often difficult for learners (e.g., “The train arrives at ten past four. The bus arrives at a quarter to six, etc.) Calling attention to form during the initial presentation can help ensure that learners pay more attention to accuracy in their subsequent oral work.
4. With less advanced students, the number and complexity of questions asked will be limited (e.g., What time does the train for Aleppo leave? When does the plane from Yerevan arrive?). With more advanced students, encourage more creative questions (e.g., What time does the train for Xining depart from platform 6? When is the ___ for Beijing departing from terminal 2? When does the last bus on Sunday depart from Samarkand to Nukus?)

5. During the oral activity, it will help to circulate around the room to assist and monitor students.
A weekend off – Planning a trip with a transportation schedule and map

Level: Intermediate/advanced

Aims: Learn about local geography; deduce information about major cities/attractions; use available resources to plan a trip

Class time: 40 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes-several class periods

Resources: Transportation schedule, area map, chart, overhead

Transportation schedules and maps are indispensable aids for the traveler. Alone or in combination, they are also highly useful authentic materials for the teaching of language. In this activity, these materials provide an educational discussion stimulus for students, who, as they study them, are able to deduce information about the major cities and attractions and use the information they glean to plan a trip.

Procedure:
1. Before class, locate a transportation schedule and map that covers the area of the schedule. Check that the cities on the map match the stops of the train.
2. Using the map, review directional/geographical vocabulary and phrases.
   a. North, East, South, West
   b. Northern/southern provinces, cities, regions, etc.
   c. Mountains, valleys, lakes, etc.
3. Displaying the schedule, ask the whole class to find on the schedule stops that correspond with
   a. Northern cities
   b. Mountainous regions
   c. Coastal areas
   d. Western lakes
   e. etc.
4. Put students into groups of three and provide each group with a copy of the schedule and map. Ask students to deduce from both pieces of information which regions and cities are of greater importance (e.g., more traveled to, more populous). You may choose to use the optional worksheet included.
5. Have students develop the following role play to be presented to the class: A traveler asks a local to recommend a nice place to visit for the upcoming 4 day holiday. The local should persuade the traveler that one city is a good place for certain reasons. Then the traveler goes to a ticket counter to find a ticket to the place. The ticket agent should help the traveler find a suitable route.

Caveats and Options:
1. The World Wide Web is an excellent source of both timetables and maps.
2. This lesson actually has quite a few components and may be best stretched over more than one class period especially if students are not as advanced.
3. A subway schedule and a city map with subway stops would be a good alternative.
Appendix: Optional Worksheet

In your groups, using the given map and schedule, try to find or deduce the following

1) Trains arriving to the capital before noon
   a. _____________
   b. _____________

2) Cities west of [Bangkok]
   a. _____________
   b. _____________

3) Important cities
   a. _____________
   b. _____________
   c. _____________

4) Cities with some point of geographical interest and a train line (lakes, mountains, rivers, etc.). Include the interesting feature.
   a. _____________
   b. _____________
   c. _____________