

The best vacation plan for our class: Developing integrated skills through Task-Based Language Teaching

Olga Ulloa Sepúlveda

o.ulloa@ufrontera.cl

Universidad de la Frontera

Introduction

Language learning is considered an interconnected process that incorporates all linguistic skills and components, as well as the social, emotional, and strategic elements involved in it. It develops through interactions intended to communicate information and to use language meaningfully to complete challenging tasks (MINEDUC, 2016). When planning lessons for the EFL classroom, it is therefore vital to adopt methodologies and strategies that facilitate linguistic communication through real-life oral interaction and authentic tasks.

A suitable approach to accomplish these conditions is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), in which students develop their linguistic skills in an integrated way by interacting to negotiate meaning in order to complete a pedagogical task. A *task* is understood as a challenge with a purpose, something students need to figure out, solve, or create. The objective is to utilise language as a tool for authentic communication, thereby achieving a non-linguistic outcome (Nunan, 2014); hence, the focus is not on grammar accuracy but on getting the message across. Additionally, incorporating instruction on language learning strategies (LLS) increases learners' self-regulation and effectiveness. Each learner develops their own way of processing the new language and establishes a consistent set of strategies for performing learning tasks (Purpura, 2014), thus becoming active participants in their own learning process.

In this task-based and skills-integrating teaching resource, enhanced with explicit LLS instruction, 8th-grade learners will interact to complete a structured, scaffolded and realistic task on an engaging topic. Besides fostering their linguistic abilities and growing in

confidence when interacting in realistic communicative situations, they will develop strategic language-learning and teamwork skills.

The proposal includes initial oral exposure to topic-related vocabulary and expressions, a transition to searching and organising written information, to conclude with intensive oral production. The plan includes the full set of activities and the necessary resources for successful implementation and assessment.

Connections with the Curriculum

TARGET GROUP: 8th grade

TIME REQUIRED: Three sessions (about 90 minutes each)

UNIT: Going places

CONTENT: - Vocabulary related to touristic attractions and related activities.

- Expressions to talk about plans.

GRAMMAR: Modals. Future tense using *going to*. Descriptive adjectives.

Learning Objectives:

- **OA 3:** Identify elements such as the purpose or aim of the text, topic, and general ideas, specific information and relevant details associated with people and their actions, places, times, speakers, and situations, in an oral text.
- **OA 4:** Use strategies to support comprehension of listened-to texts, such as making predictions, listening with a purpose, using prior knowledge, focusing attention on key words and/or expressions, using non-verbal support.
- **OA 6:** Participate in interactions and presentations using strategies to express yourself clearly and fluently, such as practising your presentation and prepare organisational and visual aids before speaking.

- **OA 10:** Demonstrate comprehension of non-literary texts by identifying the purpose or aim of the text, general ideas, specific information and details.

Attitudinal Objective:

- **OA D.** Work in a responsible, proactive and collaborative manner towards a common goal, while demonstrating respect for the interests and ideas of others.

Procedure

Class 1: Speaking - Listening - Writing

1. Warm-up: (10 minutes)

Students are all standing. The teacher explains they will all go on vacation, but they must say vacation-related words to get a ticket. As students say words, the teacher writes them on the board, and students can sit down.

2. Pre-listening: (15 minutes)

- **Activating previous knowledge:** The teacher guides students in organizing the vocabulary from the warm-up activity and other expressions in a mind map.
- **Introducing vocabulary:** The teacher writes the keywords on the board and provides a mime or description of each one for students to guess the words.

Key words: *trip, beach resort, amusement park, water slide, crowded, scuba diving, scenery, sleeping bag.*

- **Predicting the oral text:** Students are shown two stills taken from the video¹ and answer the following questions:
 - What do you see in the pictures?
 - What do you think the family are talking about? Why?



Then, working in pairs students brainstorm and write down five topic-related words or phrases they think they could hear on the audio.

3. While-listening activities: (40 minutes)

The activities below are based on the video *Comparative Adjectives in English Conversation | Comparing Vacations*. First, only the audio² will be used; then, the images will also be shown.

- **Listening for general information:** Students listen to the *audio* of the video, (without watching it) to confirm, or not, their predictions about the second question above. They also answer the questions:
 - Where are the family going for vacation?
 - How will they get there?

¹ Taken from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJTad0pyB8U>. It may be advisable to download the video in order to ensure its future availability for this activity.

² As the video is intended for low-level English students, it includes the transcript of the conversation as part of it.

- Then, they listen to the audio again to spot the words and expressions they predicted before listening. They are invited to share their results with the class. The teacher explains that *predicting content* is a language learning strategy.
- **Listening for specific information 1:** Students listen to the **first** part of the *audio* (until 2:38) to recognize positive and negative speakers' opinions about the destinations and complete the table below. The answers are shared with their partners and checked as a whole class. Feedback is given to clarify any vocabulary issues.

<p>The family decides where they will go on vacation.</p> <p>What do they say about each destination?</p>			
	Beach resource	PandaLand Amusement Park	Camping by the lake
1. Mother			
2. Father			
3. Son			
4. Daughter			

- **Listening for specific information 2:** Students listen to the **second** part of the *audio* to recognize who says each idea related to means of transportation, completing the table.

<p style="text-align: center;">The family decides how they will get to their destination.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Who expresses each idea on the table? Mark an “X”.</p>				
Idea expressed	Father	Mother	Son	Daughter
1. Gas prices are high.				
2. Driving is tiring.				
3. Traveling by bus will take longer.				
4. Traveling by plane is cool.				
5. Buses are cheaper than planes.				
6. The scenery will be more beautiful.				
7. The bus sounds better than flying.				

When ready, students volunteer to report their answers. Example: “*I think **the father** says...* ”.

Finally, they *watch* the video to check the answers.

4. Post-listening activity: (10-12 minutes)

Working in pairs, students discuss the questions below. They are encouraged to do it in English. They are then invited to share their views with the class and given feedback.

- Which vacation destination would be better for:
 - an elderly couple: the hot springs or a historical site?
 - a small group of young friends: camping by the lake or going to the beach?

5. Assessment: (10 minutes)

- Students self-assess their ability to use listening strategies with this scale:

When listening to the oral text, I could...	With a lot of help	With some help	Without help
...predict the content and some vocabulary.			
... identify general and specific information.			
...focus attention on key words and/or expressions.			
...use images and the speaker's gestures to understand better.			

Class 2: Speaking - Reading - Writing

1. Warm-up: (15 minutes)

- Motivation:** Students are shown a travel ticket for a free vacation, and answer the question:
 - “If you received a ticket like this as a present, where would you like to go? Why?”



The teacher comments on the students' responses and gives feedback, motivating them to participate.

- **Recap:** The teacher elicits information about the video watched on the previous class.

2. Vocabulary work

Students are shown pictures³ of different types of touristic destinations and asked to recognize the places as the teacher describes them. The descriptions must contain the verb *there be*, *modals* and *descriptive adjectives*. For instance:

“In this place...

- ... *there is* natural hot water
- ... *there are* high mountains.
- ... you *can* ride a roller coaster.
- ... you *can't* go rafting, but you *can* swim.
- ... you *must* pay for entrance tickets.
- ... you *mustn't* make noise.
- ... you *should* book a camping site in advance.



³ Pictures taken from Wikimedia Commons. See Appendix 1.

Then, students are asked to do the same activity in pairs using the same pictures projected on the board. Other similar ones may also be added. The teacher monitors and helps.

3. Task: Preparing the trip plan: (70 minutes)

- **Organization:** The teacher explains to students that they are going to plan the *best vacation trip* for their class. Teams are formed, assigned a destination to work on and given links to websites (see Appendix 2)⁴, or printed material from them, for searching information.
- **Destinations:** San Pedro de Atacama, Valparaíso, Rapa Nui, Pucón, Torres del Paine National Park, Chiloé Island.
- **Preparing the trip plan:** The teacher encourages students to use reading strategies such as focusing on headlines, pictures and tables, and then look for keywords in the text to find specific information. The teacher also motivates them to collaborate with their team and take responsibility.
- Students search information in English, discuss it and make decisions. They prepare a PowerPoint presentation or poster including information and images about:

- Destination	- Means of	- Activities
- Time	transportation	- Equipment/clothing
- Accommodation	- Attractions	needed
- **Homework:** The teams should rehearse their presentations using the expressions suggested on the next page and providing reasons or details wherever possible.

⁴ It may be advisable to download the information from these pages in order to ensure its future availability for this activity.

Example: “We are going to...

1. ...go to (place) because it is ...(adjectives).
2. ...stay for (period), from (date) to (date).
3. ...get there by (means of transport) because...
4. ...stay at/in a (accommodation) because...
5. ...visit (attractions) because...
6. ... do ...(activities)...
7. To go there, we must carry/wear...

4. Assessment: Students self-assess their use of English during the task using this rating scale:

I used English to....	No	Sometimes	Always
1. ...describe places.			
2. ...compare places.			
3. ...make suggestions.			
4. ...give my opinion.			
5. ...ask questions.			

Class 3: Speaking – Listening – Writing

1. Preparing to present: (10-12 minutes)

The teacher greets students and announces that it is *decision day* regarding the class vacation trip. Then, they briefly review the key vocabulary and expressions that will be useful for the presentations. Any questions are answered, and students are encouraged to be confident and speak as much English as possible during their presentations.

2. Presentation of vacation trip plans (45 minutes)

Each team presents their trip plan to the class using the prepared visual aids. While listening, the audience takes notes using the graphic organiser below. These notes will later be used to help decide where the class should go on their class trip.

Destination	Touristic attractions	Accommodation	Activities you can do	Equipment/ clothing
1. San Pedro de Atacama				
2. Valparaíso				
3. Rapa Nui Island				
4. Pucón				
5. Chiloé Island				
6. Torres del Paine National Park				

3. The decision (10-12 minutes)

- In teams, and using their notes from the presentations, students discuss which vacation trip is the best for their class, writing down at least three reasons to support their decision. Each team is permitted to mention two choices, but only one of these for their own plan.
- Afterwards, a representative from each team is requested to orally announce their selection and to provide a justification for their decision. The teacher records the

choices on the board. These are counted, and the destination of the class vacation is revealed.




- After congratulating all the teams on their hard work, and as a grand finale, the teacher solemnly presents the class with a large travel ticket prepared in advance. This ticket is issued in the name of the class, with a blank space for the destination to be filled in at that moment.

4. Reflexion and assessment (10-12 minutes)

- **Reflexion:** Students are invited to reflect on their work and learning process during the three classes. The teacher facilitates a whole-class discussion highlighting the use of strategies, guided by these or similar questions:
 - What have we learned in these classes?
 - What did we do to learn what we learned?
 - How have we monitored our progress?

The discussion should focus on the learning process and the strategies employed.

- **Assessment:** Students assess their own contribution to teamwork using this rating scale:

How did I contribute to my team....?	Sometimes 	Usually 	Always 
1. I actively participated in teamwork.			
2. I listened respectfully to the team's contributions.			
3. I maintained a positive attitude when carrying out team tasks.			
4. I completed the assigned tasks.			
5. I contributed to a positive group working environment.			

Appendices

Appendix 1. Sources of images used in Class 2. Vocabulary work.

Hots springs

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hot_Springs_National_Park_007.jpg#Licensing

Lake beach

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monoxylon_beach_Lake_Malawi_1557.jpg

Volcano

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Volcán_Lonquimay_Reserva_Nacional_Malalcahuello-Nalcas_04.jpg

Museum

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Room_9,_Victoria_and_Albert_Museum,_London.jpg

Amusement park

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amusement_park,_Southend-on-Sea_-_geograph.org.uk_-_2471103.jpg

Art Gallery

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gallery_display_of_American_paintings_formerly_in_the_collection_of_the_Corcoran_Gallery_of_Art,_now_at_the_National_Gallery_of_Art_in_Washington,_D.C.jpg#global_usage

Appendix 2. Links to websites about touristic destinations

San Pedro de Atacama

<https://worldlyadventurer.com/things-to-do-in-atacama-desert>

https://www.visitchile.com/en/tourist-guides/san-pedro-de-atacama/#scroll-where_to_go

<https://ecochile.travel/8-things-i-wish-i-knew-before-visiting-the-atacama>

Valparaíso

<https://www.gochile.cl/en/articles/what-to-see-in-valparaiso-the-perfect-route-in-the-city-of-culture.htm>

<https://www.novo-monde.com/en/things-to-do-valparaiso-chile>

<https://www.chile.travel/en/where-to-go/destination/valparaiso>

<https://worldlyadventurer.com/things-to-do-valparaiso>

Rapa Nui Island

<https://www.easterisland.travel/easter-island-facts-and-info>

<https://www.chile.travel/en/where-to-go/macrozone/rapa-nui>

<https://www.gochile.cl/en/easter-island>

Pucón

<https://puconchile.travel/#>

<https://www.gochile.cl/en/articles/what-to-do-in-pucon-over-a-weekend.htm>

<https://carolinerosetravel.com/discovering-pucon-a-complete-travel-guide-and-best-things-to-do>

Chiloé Island

<https://www.gochile.cl/en/articles/the-7-must-see-sights-of-chiloe.htm>

<https://thisremotecorner.com/travel-guide-to-chiloe-island-chile>

<https://talesfromthelens.com/chiloe-island-chile>

<https://thisremotecorner.com/travel-guide-to-chiloe-island-chile>

Torres del Paine National Park

<https://worldlyadventurer.com/torres-del-paine-national-park>

<https://torresdelpaine.com/en/#>

<https://www.wanderlustdesigners.com/activities-in-torres-del-paine>

<https://chile.travel/en/blog-en-2/torres-del-paine-how-to-get-there-and-where-to-stay-to-enjoy-its-landscapes>

Appendix 3. Answer Key

- **Class 1. Listening for specific information 1.**

The family decides where they will go on vacation. What do they say about each destination?			
Opinions	Beach resource	PandaLand Amusement Park	Camping by the lake
1. Mother	<i>More comfortable</i>	<i>Expensive</i>	<i>Cheaper</i>
2. Father	<i>Hotter, busier, less interesting. Likes fishing and scuba diving in the ocean</i>	<i>Crowded</i>	<i>Quieter</i>
3. Son	<i>Nicer, cleaner hotel</i>	-----	<i>Smelly lake</i>
4. Daughter	<i>Boring</i> <i>More fun than camping</i>	<i>Exciting, closer, get faster</i>	<i>Boring</i>

- **Class 1. Listening for specific information 2**

1. Father 2. Father 3. Son 4. Daughter 5. Mother 6. Mother 7. Daughter

- **Class 2. Vocabulary work**

1. Hot springs 2. Lake beach 3. Volcano 4. Museum 5. Amusement park 6. Art gallery

References

- MINEDUC. (2016). *Idioma extranjero: Inglés Programa de Estudio Octavo básico*. Ministerio de Educación de Chile.
<https://bibliotecadigital.mineduc.cl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12365/630/MONO-136.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Nunan, D. (2014). Task-Based Teaching and Learning. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. M. Brinton, & M. A. Snow (Eds.). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (4th ed., pp. 455–470). Heinle Cengage Learning.
- Purpura, J. E. (2004). Language Learner Strategies and Styles. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. M. Brinton, & M. A. Snow (Eds.). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (4.^a ed., pp. 532–549). Heinle Cengage Learning.