Fantasy Vacation Project

A Multimodal Grammar & Digital Literacy Unit
for ESOL Level 1 & Level 2 Students

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Introduction

Language education is the cornerstone of a successful academic and professional career. When academic English proficiency falls behind grade-level expectations, students face a compounding cycle of academic frustration, elevated affective filters, and diminished long-term opportunities. For first- and second-generation immigrant students, effective language acquisition is pivotal to socio-economic mobility, community engagement, and psychological well-being. Research on acculturation and development among immigrant youth highlights that structural barriers to successful integration and language acquisition increase vulnerability to systemic inequities, psychological distress, and marginalization (Schwartz et al., 2015). Conversely, robust linguistic and social integration serves as a powerful protective factor, empowering students to realize the educational and economic promise of their communities.

The stakes are high, and recent national indicators underscore the urgency. Over the past decade, national assessment data, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reflect persistent declines in reading proficiency across U.S. schools. A primary driver of this trend is low student engagement. Traditional instruction often competes unsuccessfully with interactive digital media, relying heavily on standardized workbooks and high-stakes test prep that elevate anxiety and raise the affective filter that naturally impedes language acquisition.

To re-engage English Language Learners (ELLs) and build authentic academic literacy, educators must reorient instruction around meaningful, student-centered contexts. Storytelling, narrative construction, and real-world planning are primordial cognitive activities that naturally motivate learning. The Fantasy Vacation Project leverages this intrinsic desire to explore and communicate. By integrating grammar mastery, digital literacy, and basic financial planning into a multimodal project, this unit lowers affective barriers, fosters functional digital skills (such as budget compilation, data navigation, and presentation design), and scaffolds academic language acquisition.

Through project-based learning of this nature, we can re-engage our students in academic discourse, support positive social integration, and equip emerging bilingual scholars with the skills necessary to thrive in higher education and the modern workforce.

Goals & Objectives

Project Overview & Purpose

The Fantasy Vacation Project integrates English language acquisition with essential digital and financial literacy skills. Designed specifically for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Level 1 (Entering/Beginning) and Level 2 (Emerging) students, this unit guides learners through planning a realistic vacation, researching costs, writing structured target-tense sentences, creating a PowerPoint deck, and delivering an oral presentation.

Core Objectives

- **Grammar Mastery —** Level 1 (Beginning): Construct 9 basic sentences using the Simple Future Tense ("I will visit...", "I am going to eat...") following structural sentence frames to outline a 3-day travel itinerary.
- **Grammar Mastery —** Level 2 (Emerging): Construct 16 expanded sentences using the Simple Future Tense with multi-clause structures, time transitions ("On Day 2, I will..."), detailed itemized costs, and source citations across a 5-day travel itinerary.
- **Digital Literacy:** Navigate travel search engines, compile itinerary details, download relevant imagery, and assemble a professional slide deck using Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.
- **Financial Literacy & Budgeting:** Research real-world prices for flights, hotels, meals, and activities, compiling an itemized budget table.
- **Oral Communication:** Present project slides orally to peers using clear pronunciation, visual aids, and target verb tenses.
- **Research & Citation:** Demonstrate basic web research skills and (for Level 2) cite source websites.

Florida B.E.S.T. Standards & WIDA Benchmarks

Florida B.E.S.T. ELA Standards

- **ELA.612.C.1.3 / ELA.ELL.1.1:** Write narratives or informational texts using grade-appropriate conventions and target verb structures.
- **ELA.612.C.2.1:** Present information orally using visual aids (PowerPoint) to enhance audience understanding.
- **ELA.612.C.4.1:** Conduct research using digital tools to gather factual information (pricing, locations, schedules).
- **ELA.612.C.5.1:** Integrate multimodal elements (images, budget graphics) into digital presentations.

WIDA English Language Development Standards (Level 1 & Level 2)

- **ELD Standard 1 (Social & Instructional):** Communicate in English for classroom interactions and research tasks.
- **ELD Standard 2:** Language of Language Arts:
    - **Level 1 (Entering):** Produce short sentence frames in the simple future tense using visual graphic organizers.
    - **Level 2 (Emerging):** Produce expanded sentences in the simple past tense and present connected ideas in a structured presentation.

Course Outline & Assessment Structure

Unit Sequence Overview

- **Phase 1:** Direct Instruction & Guided Notes (Grammar focus: Simple Future vs. Simple Past).
- **Phase 2:** Internet Research & Budgeting (Flight, hotel, dining, 3–5 activities/day with costs).
- **Phase 3:** Sentence Drafting (Scaffolded sentence-building worksheets with marked structural elements).
- **Phase 4:** PowerPoint Creation (Slide formatting, image integration, budget slide).
- **Phase 5:** Oral Presentations & Peer Evaluation.

Grading & Assessment Framework

To reward consistent effort and multi-skill development, students earn three distinct grades:

Category	Assessment Type	Weight / Credit Type	Description
Complete Packet	Formative	Classwork Credit	Completion of direct notes, web research tables, and scaffolded sentence draft worksheets.
PowerPoint Deck	Summative	Test Credit #1	Design quality, image relevance, slide structure, correct sentence grammar, and budget inclusion.
Oral Presentation	Summative	Test Credit #2	Eye contact, voice clarity, tense consistency during speech, and effective use of slides.

Step-by-Step Implementation Guide

Phase 1: Direct Instruction & Skill Workshops *(2 Class Periods)*

Explicit Instruction – Cornell Notes & Digital Research Protocol

- Teacher Modeling (20 mins):
    - Introduce the Cornell Note-taking format (Cues/Keywords on the left, Notes/Data on the right, Summary at the bottom).
    - Demonstrate how to extract pertinent details from travel sites (Google Flights, Expedia, Booking.com) without copying full paragraphs.
    - *Example:* Show how a raw flight query ($450, Miami to Tokyo, Delta Airlines) maps into the Cornell layout under the cues Flight Cost, Airline, and Layover Duration.
- Guided Practice (20 mins):
    - Provide a sample webpage printout/projection. Have students fill out a mock Cornell Note sheet focusing on a target hotel's nightly rate and amenities.
- Formative Check (10 mins):
    - Review student summaries at the bottom of their Cornell sheet to check for conciseness.

Differentiated Grammar Workshop (Future Tense Structures)

- Level 1 (Entering/Emerging):
    - Focus on formulaic structure: Subject + will / is going to + Base Verb + Destination/Cost.
    - *Anchor Sentence:* "My flight will cost $550." / "We are going to stay at Hotel Maya."
- Level 2 (Developing/Expanding):
    - Focus on complex time expressions and transitional phrases: Time Expression + , + Subject + will + Base Verb + Complement/Cost.
    - *Anchor Sentence:* "On the second day of our trip, we will visit the Louvre Museum for $25."
- **Level 3+ (Bridging/Reach):**
    - Focus on conditional future structures, detailed budgetary explanations, and compound sentences.
    - *Anchor Sentence:* "Although the boutique hotel costs $180 per night, it includes free breakfast, which reduces our daily food budget."

Phase 2: Media Center Research & Cornell Note Capture *(2 Class Periods)*

Media Center Day 1: Logistics & Day 1 Itinerary

- Focus: Flights, Lodging, and Initial Arrival.
- Student Tasks:
  - Search and record round-trip flight details (airline, total cost, travel dates).
  - Select lodging (hotel, hostel, or rental) and compute total cost (Nightly Rate × Number of Nights).
  - Identify Day 1 activity (e.g., airport transport, dinner).
- Worksheet/Notes Requirement: Complete Cornell Note Sheet #1 with source URLs, itemized costs, and short descriptions.

Media Center Day 2: Days 2–5 Itinerary & Budget Calculations

- Focus: Daily Excursions, Meals, and Financial Calculations.
- Student Tasks:
  - Research 1–2 specific activities per day for Days 2 through 5 (tours, museum admissions, park fees).
  - Estimate daily meal allowances ($30–$50 per day).
  - Calculate running totals on the Cornell Note summary line.
- Worksheet/Notes Requirement: Complete Cornell Note Sheet #2 covering all itinerary items and final math checks.

Phase 3: Scaffolded Sentence Drafting & Peer Editing *(2 Class Periods)*

Day 1: Sentence Drafting via Tiered Worksheets

Students transfer factual data from their Cornell Notes into full prose sentences on their designated level-based worksheets.

ESOL Proficiency Level	Required Sentence Output per Day	Grammar & Structural Focus
Level 1 (Entering)	1–2 sentences per slide/day	Simple Subject-Verb-Object structures (I will go to..., The hotel costs...).

ESOL Proficiency Level	Required Sentence Output per Day	Grammar & Structural Focus
Level 2 (Developing)	2–3 sentences per slide/day	Inversion with time markers, introductory clauses, detailed complements.
Level 3+ (Expanding/Bridging)	3–4 sentences per slide/day	Complex sentences, varied vocabulary, conditional clauses, budget justifications.

Day 2: Structured Peer Review & Teacher Check-In

- Peer Editing Checklist:
    1. Are all verbs in the future tense (will or going to)?
    2. Does every sentence start with a capital letter and end with appropriate punctuation?
    3. Do the dollar amounts in the sentences match the initial Cornell Note records?
- Teacher Sign-Off: Individual conference with each student to approve draft sentences prior to slide generation.

Phase 4: Slide Deck Assembly & Visual Design *(2 Class Periods)*

Students use their approved sentence worksheets to build a digital slide deck in PowerPoint or Google Slides.

Slide Deck Structure (Minimum 7-8 Slides)

- Slide 1: Title Slide (Destination, Student Name, Class Period)
- Slide 2: Transportation & Flight Details (Logistics + Approved Sentences)
- Slide 3: Accommodations / Hotel Details (Hotel Name, Nightly Rate + Images)
- Slides 4–7: Daily Itineraries (Days 1–4/5: Sentences, Activities, Daily Costs)
- Final Slide: Master Budget Summary & Source Citations

Slide Deck Requirements & Guidelines

- Text Transfer: Copy approved sentences directly from Phase 3 worksheets onto respective slides.
- Visual Standards: Every itinerary slide must include at least one high-quality image representing the activity or location.
- Budget Table: The final slide must feature a 3-column table detailing: Category / Item Description / Total Cost.

Phase 5: Rehearsal & Oral Presentations *(2 Class Periods)*

Day 1: Guided Oral Rehearsal

- Self-Practice (5–10 runs): Students practice reading their slide sentences aloud at their desks, focusing on volume, pacing, and clear pronunciation of numerical values (e.g., "$1,250" read as "one thousand two hundred fifty dollars").
- Partner Read-Aloud: Pair students to deliver their presentations to each other. Partners provide feedback using a rubric focusing on eye contact and clarity.

Day 2: Formal Presentations

- Format: 2–3 minute oral presentation per student using their slide deck.
- Audience Role: Listening students record one interesting fact and the total trip cost for each presenter on a peer-listening tracking sheet.

Resource & Material List

School-Provided Resources & Facilities

- **Computer Lab / Media Center:** Dedicated access for 2 class periods for online travel research, budgeting, and PowerPoint creation.
- **Direct Instruction Presentation:** Teacher-created PowerPoint introducing the Cornell Notes method, project expectations, search strategies, and sample slides.

Classroom Supplies & Materials

- **Student Packets:** Printed multi-page Fantasy Vacation Project Worksheets (paper & ink provided by teacher).
- **Basic Writing Tools:** Pencils, pens, and student notebooks (for Cornell Notes).
- **Digital Devices (Optional/Supplemental):** Personal devices (smartphones, laptops, tablets) or school-issued laptops for flexible classroom research.

Software & Digital Applications

- **Word Processing & Presentations:** Microsoft Word (or Google Docs) for sentence drafting; Microsoft PowerPoint (or Google Slides) for slide assembly.
- **Web Resources:** Travel Search Engines & Web Resources:
    - Google Flights / Airline Sites (flight pricing and schedules)
    - Hotels.com / Booking.com (accommodations and nightly rates)
    - Google Maps / TripAdvisor (tourist attractions, local dining, and ticket prices)

Conclusion & Adaptability Rationale

The Fantasy Vacation Project serves as a foundational blueprint for multimodal, project-based language learning. While designed specifically to lower affective filters and build target tenses (Simple Future and Simple Past) for ESOL Levels 1 and 2, the structural scaffolding of this unit is easily adaptable across grade levels, proficiency tiers, and content areas:

- **Advanced Linguistic Extensions:** For higher proficiency ELLs (Levels 3–4) and general ELA classrooms, the project can pivot to target complex grammatical structures, such as conditional statements ("If our flight is delayed, we will..."), modal auxiliaries of preference and necessity, and comparative writing when evaluating travel options.
- **Literary & Historical Mapping:** The itinerary model translates seamlessly into ELA and Humanities literature units. Students can design multimodal tours of literary settings—such as mapping Odysseus's journey across the Aegean and Ionian Seas, planning a historical excursion through Shakespearean Verona, or constructing a creative map of fictional settings like Carroll's Wonderland. In this format, budget items and activity descriptions are replaced with textual evidence and literary analysis.
- **Hometown & Heritage Cultural Guides:** To foster community pride and civic engagement, the unit can be reframed as a "Local Cultural Tour." Students research, budget, and present a guided tour of their current hometown or native city, building authentic real-world research skills while celebrating local history and identity.
- **Post-Trip Past Tense Reflection:** Once students complete and present their future-tense vacation plans, the unit can seamlessly pivot to Simple Past Tense reporting. Students re-frame their completed slides into a post-trip narrative ("I visited...", "I ate...", "I spent..."), allowing Level 2 and Level 3 learners to practice verb conversions (regular -ed and irregular past forms) using the exact research data they already gathered.

Ultimately, by grounding language acquisition in authentic research, spatial planning, and narrative presentation, educators can transform routine grammar practice into an engaging, student-centered learning experience.