

Assignment Title: Designing Language Games

Type of Course: Second Semester Portuguese Language

Mechanic(s): Space, Time, & Chance

Draft of Prompt:

Create – from scratch – a game that involves the formation of sentences in Portuguese expressing commands and recommendations, using verbs in the present subjunctive.

Students work in pairs (with one group of three, if there is an odd number of students), which are determined randomly by drawing lots.

Each pair works at a different “station” (table). They are given stacks of colored paper – light blue, light green, and pink. For 10 minutes, the students create playing cards for the game by drawing pictures and symbols on the cards. The blue cards represent people (e.g., boy, dentist, grandparents). The green cards represent verbs that convey desire or suggestions (e.g., to want, to recommend, to prefer, to hope). The pink cards represent verbal phrases that describe actions or activities (e.g., to swim in the pool, to walk in the park, to cook a meal). At this stage, the students should make the cards using only drawings or symbols, without words. They should aim to make ten cards in the “person” category (blue cards) and five cards of each of the other categories (green and pink). After this phase, the students roll dice to determine which other station they will move to.

At the new station, the students will complete the “flash cards” by writing (on the reverse of each card) the words that correspond to the images – for example, if a pink card has a picture of a person riding a bike, then the student should write “to ride a bike” on the reverse. After 10 minutes, the game cards should be ready. In case of doubt about what a drawing represents, students may consult with the card’s creator by asking questions in Portuguese (e.g., “Is this supposed to be a dog or a horse?”). After this stage, the students move to a new station, to play with the set of cards that they have not yet seen.

Now the students have completed the process of making the game cards and are ready to start playing the game. At each station, each category of cards is shuffled and placed in a pile with the drawings facing up. The blue cards should be split randomly into two piles. So, there should be two piles of blue cards, one pile of green cards, and one pile of pink cards. Dice are rolled to determine which student goes first. That student begins by forming a sentence containing the elements pictured on the four face-up cards (e.g., “The dentist hopes that the grandmother walks the dog in the park.”) In Portuguese, this sentence requires the subjunctive form of the verb “to walk.” If students are unable to come up with the vocabulary words for describing the images, they may “cheat” by looking at the other side of the cards and reading the words. Most of the sentences will be nonsensical, as with the above sample sentence. The other student

then “corrects” the sentence by replacing one or more of the words with more appropriate ones (e.g., “The dentist hopes that her patient will brush her teeth.”). After going through the set of cards once, the students shuffle each pile and play the game a second time, to review the vocabulary and the grammatical forms (the present subjunctive). After 20 minutes of playing the game, the class reconvenes for a game of role play and charades, as follows.

Each pair of students selects its favorite sentences created during the game (likely the nonsensical, silly sentences), and prepares to present these sentences to the class – not by speaking or writing, but by acting. The three pairs/groups draw lots to determine the order presentations. The students take turns acting out their selected sentences, taking on the roles of the people on the blue cards for each sentence (e.g., dentist, grandmother). During this role play, the subjunctive form is replaced with the imperative (command) form – e.g., the sentence “The dentist hopes that her patient will brush her teeth” becomes “Brush your teeth!” (imperative/command form of the verb) when spoken by the student acting the part of the “dentist” in the role play. The other students have to guess the sentence, like in the game charades. There is a limit of 30 seconds for the role play performance of each sentence.

After the game of charades, the students write their selected sentences on the whiteboard and read them aloud to their classmates. The verbs forms and vocabulary are reviewed and corrected.

The students may, at any time, propose and vote on changes to the rules. For example, the above mentioned time limit could be changed from 30 to 20 seconds. Such rules changes must be proposed in Portuguese using the present subjunctive form (e.g., “I would like for the time limit to be changed to 20 seconds”), so as to encourage further use and practice of the target grammatical forms.