

THE DIRECTIONS GAME

I have been practicing this activity to reinforce directions for several years now in my French courses. In French it is very important to distinguish between *droit* and *droite*. This activity is very popular among students within all sections of French, so much so that students often mention it specifically when completing end-of-semester evaluation forms. Although I teach university-level students, this activity will work well also at the high school level.

All instructors are aware of how important the teacher-student relationship is in a foreign language classroom. In general, students need to feel comfortable in the class and comfortable speaking and making mistakes without feeling pressure. Because of its “comic” nature, this is an excellent activity to break the tension barrier, since it involves both students and teacher. It generates amusement and laughter from both the individual student and the entire class when mistakes are made.

Preparations before beginning of class

- (1) On index cards or index size paper, write one student name per card.
- (2) On the day the activity is to be performed, arrange desks in rows, if they aren't already.
- (3) On the day the activity is to be performed, take roll using these cards so that if a student is absent the respective card may be removed from the deck
- (4) You may wish to write vocabulary in points 1 and 2 below on the board. However, the activity works better if the words are *not* written on the board, in particular if you wish to focus on *understanding* and *giving* directions. This is an aspect that, at the teacher's discretion, can be modified according to class level, proficiency, and classroom needs.

Activity during class

Preparation:

- (1) Review the pronunciation of the direction words: *tout droit*, *à droite*, *à gauche*, insisting a few times on the difference between *droit* and *droite*. It is always useful to mimic and show the words with your arms.
- (2) Review the imperative commands *allez*, *arrêtez*, *continuez*, and *tournez*. Again mimic them.
- (3) Tell the class you are going to play a game. (You may or may not wish to write an outline of the game directions on the board).
- (4) Shuffle the student name cards and distribute them randomly. While distribut-

ing cards, make sure the name on the card is that of a student across the room, not right next to the person receiving the card.

Activity:

- (5) Choose a student to begin and stand right next to his or her desk.
- (6) In French, tell this student to read aloud the name on the card.
- (7) In French, tell that same student to give you directions to go to the student whose name is on the card.
- (8) Once you are at the other student's desk, repeat steps 6 and 7 until every student has spoken and/or for the time you had allotted to this activity.

It is important that you gently run into objects (desks, blackboard, wall, door, etc.) if students give/pronounce wrong directions, don't tell you to turn when necessary, or if they forget to say “stop” before telling you to turn. Make appropriate comments (“*aie!*” “*zut,*” etc.) when this happens. This is the tension breaker and the “fun” of the activity, together with controlling the teacher! Also make sure to vary routes. If students don't vary routes on their own, after a number of times, while the current student is speaking, suggest to him or her an alternate path, turning at a different row of desks or taking a longer or shorter route.

Variations:

- (a) before repeating steps 6 through 8, turn to face the blackboard each time.
- (b) after a few tries or on different days, have students give each other directions
- (c) to raise the difficulty, use a blindfold

Example (In parenthesis are “stage directions” for the teacher):

Teacher: Alors, Anna, ta carte dit quoi?

Anna: Comment?

Teacher: Le nom sur ta carte, c'est...

Anna: Ah oui! Lisa

Teacher: Lisa où es-tu? Lève la main! Bon, Anna, dis-moi comment aller à Lisa. Donne-moi des directions comme ‘Allez-tout droit,’ etc.

Anna: Allez tout droite (sic)
(notice pronunciation mistake)

Teacher: Oui? Tu es sûre? Tout droite? (sic)

Anna: Oui.

Teacher: OK. (go right, hit desk, student repeats)

Anna: Oh no! Tournez-vous à gauche, Madame. Allez tout droit. (student self corrects)

Teacher: Très bien.

Anna: Continuez tout droit, continuez tout droit...Arrêtez. (encourage the student)

Anna: Tournez à droite, continuez tout droit; arrêtez. Tournez à droite. Continuez un peu droit. Arrêtez. C'est Lisa.

Teacher: Super, Anna! Maintenant Lisa, le nom sur ta carte, c'est?

Lisa: C'est Sam

Teacher: Bon, dis-moi comment j'arrive à Sam.

Lisa: Donc, tournez-vous, tournez-vous. Allez tout droit... (etc.)

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