Participant A

WA#1 Reflection on Learning

**Description**

During the ‘Slap Game,’ everyone was crowded together around a table hunched over, standing shoulder to shoulder. I was standing next to Jill and Mike. Josh called at numbers and we tried to grab the cards. I felt eager, excited, and competitive because of the nature of the game. I remember when he called out ‘shvidi,’ I scanned the table and spotted the ‘seven’ card across the table from me and my hand shot out. It was in front of Sarah. I grabbed it just as she was putting her hand down to get it. I felt exhilarated to get the card, but I also felt bad for Sarah, who hadn’t gotten any cards at that point. I started getting a little paranoid that maybe others were starting to resent me, but the competitiveness inside of me was already at full speed so I couldn’t put a break in it.

**Interpretation**

I would say this game helped my learning because it allowed me to focus more on the task. I also felt rather confident because I had been going over the lessons outside of the classroom. I didn’t know ahead of time we’d be doing the slap game, but I just liked demonstrating to my friends and family that I could count from 0-9 in Georgian, so I was inadvertently very well prepared for the activity. I also noticed that I feel less comfortable failing in front of people I don’t know as well because I don’t want them to misjudge my competency. This made me more competitive because I didn’t want to feel stupid if I didn’t win or at least didn’t grab the cards a respectable number of times. At the same time, my paranoia came because other students like Sarah may have been getting frustrated because they couldn’t get as many cards.

**Generalization**

Based on this activity, I feel competitive activities can help the learning process, but only if done with certain things in mind. I believe a lack of preparation for a competitive activity leads to frustration, which can lead to a hindrance of participation. I also learned from ‘processing’ of the Georgian lesson that some students were very adverse to competitive games in general. I think that may be because they are thinking so much about how others perceive them and also are concerned about not wanting to offend others. I can imagine that this might depend a lot on the personality of the learner and their prior experience. I did a lot of sports growing up and competition never felt like a ‘mean’ thing to me. However, I can also see that when a few students dominate a competitive game, less competitive students could become discouraged which could actually hinder their learning.

**Planning Action**

The next time I’m teaching, I’d like to try a slap game, but I will be sure to tell students the night before that there will be a game to review the material in the next class. I’ll also try to judge how outspoken and non-sensitive the students are before I decide how I want to do a competitive activity. Those who seem very nervous with the idea will be grouped with others like them, so they get a chance to try to become more comfortable while in a less stressful situation. Competitive students will be matched with each other so that they feel there is a challenge and so they will not lose focus on the material. The next time I play this type of game, I’m going to adopt a strategy where I sometimes grab the card and sometimes just try to see all four cards without touching them. That would be a challenge for me without hindering my peers.

Participant B

WA#1 Reflection on Learning

During the ‘Slap Game,’ everyone was crowded together around a table hunched over, standing shoulder to shoulder. I was standing next to Jill and Mike. Josh called at numbers and we tried to grab the cards. I felt eager, excited, and competitive because of the nature of the game. I remember when he called out ‘shvidi,’ I scanned the table and spotted the ‘seven’ card across the table from me and my hand shot out. It was in front of Sarah. I grabbed it just as she was putting her hand down to get it.

I think this game really helped me internalize the numbers. I wasn’t just trying to memorize the number, but was actually using the Georgian numbers to accomplish a different task i.e. to get the cards. I needed to know the numbers well in order to get the cards. I think this sense of purpose somehow accelerated my learning. The game also was very emotional and multi-sensory, and the Georgian numbers were just a part of that. Even now, I have a very clear memory of the “shvidi” of hearts sitting on the edge of the table.

I believe that students need ‘real-world’ tasks to help them learn grammar and vocabulary. These can be competitive games like “Slap” but can also be cooperative activities like asking for and giving phone numbers. That activity had the same real-world quality because we were using the Georgian numbers to accomplish the task of getting each other’s phone numbers. I think that this type of focused communicative activity was really missing from my Spanish classes in college. It felt like we just memorized lots of grammar and vocabulary. The teacher did give us some chances to speak but the topics were so hard, that I could really say anything. I believe that for a communicative activity to work it not only needs to have that real-world quality but also must be focused enough that it is doable based on the students’ level.

As I continue to learn Spanish, I’m going to try and do some focused real-world activities like this. For example, I think my Spanish is good enough that I could play “Twenty questions,” but maybe I’ll limit it to things in my house. That way I could review all of the rooms and objects that I know. (Ex. Is it in the kitchen? Is it big?) I’m going to play this game with my friend, Tom, who also speaks Spanish. He’s a bit better than me but that might help because he could teach me some new words as we play. As a teacher, I will also try out some guessing games like “Twenty Questions.” I could do that topics like guessing a person in class (Ex. Is this person wearing black shoes?) or guessing a city on a map (Ex. Is it on the coast? Is it a big city?).