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**TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAMES (TTRPGS) AS A TOOL FOR MOTIVATING
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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RECIFE - PE
2022

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attainment of the degree Bachelor in English
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Monografia apresentada ao Programa de Graduação em Letras da Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Centro de Artes e Comunicação, como requisito para a obtenção do título de Licenciatura em Língua Inglesa.

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“Why do we tell stories? To try and make sense of a world that can be terrifying and enormous. In Exandria, I don’t know that your story will long be known. I don’t know who will remain to tell it, but it did happen – and it did matter. And though the Calamity is here, because of you, it will not be here forever.”

(Brennan Lee Mulligan)

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ABSTRACT

How to successfully motivate students during the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language is a relevant subject since many students find their learning process to be demotivating (BARCELOS, 2006). This is a bibliographical research of three experiments (DA ROCHA, 2019; JOHNSON, 2021; and ARAÚJO, 2022) that used Role Playing Games (RPGs) as a tool for fostering motivation in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. The theoretical background used in this work is student motivation and collaborative learning studies by Brown (2001), Michelon (2003), Cavenaghi (2009), and Ng and Ng (2015). In addition, conceptions about games as a motivational tool by Flores (2015); Soares (2012); and Júnior (2018) have also been also considered. The experiments have been analyzed in terms of successful strategies using RPGs in order to enhance student motivation. The analysis has revealed that students are more motivated when they choose or create the game setting for the story, as well as the characters they are going to play. Moreover, the game becomes more motivating when there is a gradual increase in narrative freedom and complexity in their choices during gameplay. Finally, a pedagogical model using RPGs has been proposed taking into consideration the observations made about the experiments. This model took Task Based Language Teaching as a methodological procedure based on the theoretical framework proposed by Shehadeh (2005); Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011); and mainly by the framework put forth by Willis (1995).

Keywords: role playing games; student motivation; task-based language teaching.

RESUMO

Como motivar alunos com sucesso durante o ensino e aprendizagem de inglês como língua estrangeira é um tópico relevante uma vez que muitos estudantes acham o seu processo de aprendizagem desmotivador (BARCELOS, 2006). Essa é uma pesquisa bibliográfica de três experimentos (DA ROCHA, 2019; JOHNSON, 2021; and ARAÚJO, 2022) que usaram *Role Playing Games* (RPGs) como ferramenta motivacional no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira. O quadro teórico utilizado neste trabalho foi motivação estudantil e aprendizado colaborativo por Brown (2001), Michelon (2003), Cavenaghi (2009), e Ng and Ng (2015). Além disso, concepções sobre jogos como ferramenta motivacional por Flores (2015); Soares (2012); e Júnior (2018) também foram considerados. Os experimentos foram analisados no que se refere a estratégias bem sucedidas que utilizaram RPGs com objetivo de aprimorar a motivação do estudante. A análise revelou que os alunos se motivam mais quando eles escolhem ou criam o cenário da história, como também os personagens que irão jogar. Ademais, o jogo se torna mais motivador quando há um aumento gradual em liberdade narrativa e complexidade de escolhas durante a jogatina. Finalmente, um modelo pedagógico utilizando RPGs foi proposto levando em consideração as observações feitas sobre os experimentos. Esse modelo teve o ensino de línguas baseado em tarefas como procedimento metodológico, e tomou como arcabouço teórico o que foi proposto por Shehadeh (2005); Larsen-Freeman e Anderson (2011); e principalmente pelo quadro desenvolvido e apresentado por Willis (1995).

Palavras-chave: role playing games; motivação estudantil; ensino de línguas baseado em tarefas.

1. INTRODUCTION

How to successfully promote student motivation is a frequent discussion topic amongst several studies regarding the teaching of a foreign language (BROWN, 2000; BARCELOS, 2006; CAVENAGHI, 2009, NG and NG, 2015; SILVA, 2021). In fact, the quality and depth of a students' motivation to learn a foreign language is what makes a difference between a successful and an unfortunate experience (CAVENAGHI, 2009). The problem is that the latter is usually more predominant when Brazilian public schools are concerned. Students find learning English to be tedious and demotivating as pointed out by Silva (2021) and Barcelos (2006). The repetitive teaching of few grammar aspects, the absence of engaging activities and the lack of proper teaching techniques were some of the problems brought up by the participants of the study (BARCELOS, 2006). Consequently, a question arises: which teaching strategy could be used to revert this situation and successfully motivate students?

A first step to answer this question is to understand that this dissatisfaction and demotivation does not usually come from the lack of extrinsic motivation. In fact, what is found lacking is actually a deeper intrinsic desire to learn the language (BROWN, 2000; NG and NG, 2015). This intrinsic motivation comes from allowing learners to join in collaborative and cooperative activities which encourages them to find amusement and self-fulfillment in the learning process itself (BROWN, 2000; NG and NG, 2015). Teachers have a great amount of resources available in order to induce intrinsic motivation in their students, including *games*. According to Bryant (2007), it is known that learn-driven games can have some useful effects such as the collaboration between students, task-based learning, roleplaying and the visualization of complex concepts. Furthermore, gamification aids students to participate in otherwise tedious activities (JÚNIOR, 2018). To sum up, when games are correctly used, the desire to participate and engage is increased as it requires learners to not only passively receive information, but to actively play a part in a collaborative activity.

Therefore, one wonders as to which games amid several different game genres most successfully asks students to collaborate amongst themselves, and

consequently, seek to participate in the class out of their own desire and amusement. This present work investigated the hypothesis that tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs) rise as an appropriate teaching resource to incite student collaboration and consequently, intensify their intrinsic motivation.

In order to achieve such objectives, three recent case studies carried out by EFL teachers and researchers using TTRPGs in classrooms were analyzed, the first one by da Rocha (2019), the second by Johnson (2021), and the third by Araújo (2022). Based on this analysis, a template has been developed to benefit the EFL teacher who wishes to utilize this resource in their own classrooms. The guide followed the Framework for Task-Based Learning proposed by Willis (1996). In other words, this work encompassed a theoretical and methodological investigation which resulted in a pedagogical proposal using RPGs.

This work is relevant in the sense that there is a great concern to counter this repetitive, unengaging and overall demotivating environment found in English as a Foreign Language in Brazilian schools (BARCELOS, 2006; CAVENAGHI, 2009; SILVA, 2021). The usage of TTRPGs in an EFL classroom is proposed as an attempt to prompt students to contribute to the activity, take risks, and overall enhance their communication skills.

2. PROMOTING STUDENT INTRINSIC MOTIVATION WITH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

According to Cavenaghi (2009), motivation is a key ingredient in the quality and intensity of a student's schooling process as "unmotivated students [...] perform below their real potential, distract themselves easily, do not participate in the classes, hardly or never study, and distance themselves from the learning process." (CAVENAGHI, 2009, p. 249)¹

Ng and Ng (2015) also highlight the importance of motivation in a student's learning process. The authors soon differentiate two types of motivation, *extrinsic* and *intrinsic*:

¹TN: "Os estudantes desmotivados [...] apresentam desempenho abaixo de suas reais potencialidades, distraem-se facilmente, não participam das aulas, estudam pouco ou nada e se distanciam do processo de aprendizagem."

“Extrinsic motivation comes from outside the individual. Learners are extrinsically motivated when learning is done for the sake of rewards such as grades or praise that are not inherently associated with the learning itself, that is, when learning or performing well becomes necessary to earning those rewards.” (NG and NG, 2015, p. 24)

In other words, extrinsically motivated students seek to please and attend to external factors in order to participate in the construction of their own knowledge.

To oppose this idea, the authors present the intrinsic motivation, when learning is satisfactory in itself. According to them, an intrinsically motivated student finds rewards in the feeling of self-efficacy after the completion of an interesting and challenging activity. “In such tasks, learners may experience flow, and in the moment, optimal sensation of enjoyment and competence” (NG and NG, 2015, p. 24).

Intrinsic motivation is also emphasized by Brown (2000), as he describes the principles necessary for an approach to language teaching. The author defines intrinsic motivation as a student realization that the right classroom techniques might be self-rewarding and “fun, interesting, useful, or challenging, and not because they anticipate some cognitive or affective rewards from the teacher.” (BROWN, 2000, p. 59), that is, not because of external factors, but to please an internal desire to learn.

The problem is that students usually lack the intrinsic motivation to learn and participate in the English classroom (BROWN, 2000). In the works of Barcelos (2006), it is found that most Brazilian students understand the public school as a place where they are not able to fully learn English the way they would like to. This discontent towards public schools “were associated with many elements, such as pedagogical problems, (de)-motivation, (the lack of) language usage, and lack of teaching competence”. (BARCELOS, 2006, p.155)².

Barcelos (2006) and Cavenaghi (2009) both understand that Brazilian public schools prioritize the teaching of grammatical rules through the writing modality, often done in a repetitive manner and hindering students from developing their intrinsic motivation. Silva (2021) also recognizes this lack of stimulus to produce active knowledge as disruptive to the learning process and to student motivation. As the

² TN: “As razões fazem alusão a vários fatores, tais como problemas pedagógicos, (des)-motivação, (não) uso da língua e falta de competência dos professores.”

author states, “the current Brazilian approach which is focused on the structural or grammatical teaching of the language does not offer an extensive language teaching, because it sets aside its oral practice and production.” (SILVA, 2021, p. 91)³

In other words, the problem is that the activities and teaching practices carried out in schools, such as “listen, memorize, answer multiple questions, and fill in the gaps correctly” (SILVA, 2021, p. 91)⁴ do not engage students and certainly do not put them in charge of their own learning. Consequently, students feel demotivated as they see the classes as unhelpful and purposeless (SILVA, 2021, p. 14).

Then, an alternative approach is to seek different teaching approaches which help students feel intrinsically motivated. Cooperative and collaborative learning were found to be one of the alternatives capable of achieving such objectives.

Firstly, it is important to understand the concept of cooperative learning. According to Brown (2000), cooperation is different from competition, to the extent that it instigates learners to work together instead of seeking to achieve individual education in detriment of other people’s learning. In a cooperative environment, students feel compelled to share their knowledge and work together in pairs or groups as a “team”. (BROWN, 2000, p. 47). As the author explains, cooperative learning does not simply result in collaboration. In fact, for a classroom to be truly collaborative it should depend on the “socially structured exchange between learners” (BROWN, 2000, p. 47). As he states, a collaborative classroom must be constructed in a way that the whole class and the teacher work together to achieve their objectives. Furthermore, according to him, collaboration encourages learners and helps them build their own intrinsic motivation.

As for maintaining this student's intrinsic motivation, Ng and Ng (2015) also explain that the teacher should promote group and pair activities since they bolster communication and collaboration, these types of activity also grant “in itself motivation and provide more opportunities to practice using language.” (NG and NG, 2015, p. 26)

³ TN: “A vigente abordagem brasileira a qual é voltada para o ensino estrutural ou gramatical da língua, não oferece um ensino amplo de línguas, pois deixa de lado a sua prática e produção oral.”

⁴ TN: “[...] ouvir, memorizar, responder questões de múltiplas escolhas e preencher espaços adequadamente.”

To further endorse this idea, Michelon (2003) also defends group dynamics as a vital step of the learning of English. As she explains:

“In English Language learning, which predominantly occurs in a formal context, the consideration of motivational characteristics from the group seems to become more relevant, since the linguistic use takes place in situations of interaction in a social context. And the context of linguistic use, in this case and most of the time, is the classroom and the class. In this sense, the learner's intrinsic motives can be influenced by such a context.” (MICHELON, 2003, p. 88)⁵

In other words, truly using the language and socially interacting in communicative situations is motivating for the students because they have the chance to practice their linguistic skills. As those students interact with one another in engaging activities, they increasingly advance in their own knowledge.

Therefore, it is natural to assume that using such communicative and engaging activities – differently from what has been done in EFL Brazilian classrooms – facilitates the development of intrinsic motivation and overall evolution of their learning process. Finally, when it comes to choosing the appropriate teaching resource to motivate students, there is one kind of activity that is set apart from the rest, and those are games.

In the next topic, games will be discussed as an essential choice in terms of activities that bolster students' motivation.

3. GAMES AS A TOOL FOR MOTIVATING STUDENTS

As explained by Júnior (2018), games mitigate motivation problems in certain pedagogical practices. In addition, gamification is also “relevant in pedagogical practices when it promotes interaction between its participants, as well as promoting collective action so as to complete stages or finish cycles [...]” (JÚNIOR, 2018, p. 35)⁶.

⁵ TN: Na aprendizagem da LE, que ocorre predominantemente em contexto formal, a consideração das características motivacionais a partir do grupo parece se tornar mais relevante, já que o uso lingüístico se dá em situações de interação em um contexto social, e o contexto de uso lingüístico, nesse caso e na maioria das vezes, é a sala de aula e a turma. Neste sentido, os motivos internos do aprendiz podem ser influenciados por tal contexto.

⁶ TN: “[...] a gamificação pode ser relevante nas práticas pedagógicas quando promove a interação entre os participantes, bem como a ação coletiva a fim de concluir etapas ou finalizar ciclos [...]”

That is, games are significant in the learning of a foreign language when they contribute to interaction and collaboration while players work together to solve problems and advance in their goals. While students play, they feel motivated to progress as they understand their actions and choices are actually relevant to the development of their knowledge (SOARES, 2012). Additionally, it is understood that “a lot of what is achieved by the player in a game is the condition to start a new game level with a much bigger complexity, influencing the participant’s emotional and cognitive areas.” (JÚNIOR, 2018, p. 34)⁷. In other words, while the learners, or players, are engaging in the game, they feel compelled to overcome new increasingly difficult challenges and this way, learn several different skills (JÚNIOR, 2018). The activity becomes fun, challenging (BROWN, 2000) and fascinating on its own, giving students enough inspiration to feel externally and intrinsically motivated.

To further confirm this idea, as stated in the work of Flores (2015), games can be used to further explore a learner’s extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. By using rewards such as levels and points, a game appeals to a student’s external needs, but it is also “intrinsically motivating towards the achievement, mastery, autonomy, and sense of belonging.” (FLORES, 2015, p. 46).

Still, it is worth noting that the majority of games are not completely infallible. If the activity has a higher appeal to a student’s *extrinsic* motivation, either by the means of rewards or praise, it means that if the student fails to achieve such objectives their *intrinsic* motivation is affected and the game is no longer so appealing (JÚNIOR, 2018, p. 23). In the same way, if a student’s *only* motivation to participate in the game is exclusively based on receiving those rewards, failing to achieve them should remove all or the majority of their desire to participate in the game.

That is why it is important to carefully consider the kind of game and the type of activity to be carried out during the classes. Therefore, the idea defended by this work is that Tabletop Roleplaying Games (TTRPGs) are one appropriate genre of games to stimulate collaboration and enhance student’s intrinsic motivation. To

⁷ TN: “[...] muito do que é conquistado pelo jogador em um game é a condição para iniciar uma nova etapa do jogo com maior complexidade, impactando, assim, as áreas emocionais e cognitivas do participante.”

understand why they can be used as a teaching resource, first it is necessary to explain what TTRPGs are and how they work.

4. WHAT ARE TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAMES AND HOW DO THEY WORK?

Role Playing Games are collaborative games, which means you need at least two people to start playing it. Secondly, they are also a storytelling game, which means players will need to unleash their imaginations to participate. In the game, each player creates a character, or an adventurer, each different from the other. Then, they “impersonate it in a story that is collaboratively constructed while the game is played.” (DA ROCHA, 2019, p. 537). Players assume the role of a different person, with different personalities and characteristics, which will then influence their way of traversing this collaborative story.

The most famous and successful example of a TTRPG is the high fantasy game “Dungeons & Dragons”, inspired by war games and works such as Lord of the Rings and its creation dating back in the middle 1970s in the United States. As Mearls (2014) states in the *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* (which is part of the core rule books of the game): “You don’t need to be a master storyteller or a brilliant artist. You just need to aspire to create, to have the courage of someone who is willing to build something and share it with others.” (MEARLS, 2014, p. 5)

What games such as “Dungeons & Dragons” do differently from the vast amount of storytelling and make-believe games is that the structure of the story will be somewhat randomly determined. More specifically, the consequence of the characters’ actions in the story will be resolved by the rolling of different dice (MEARLS, M. 2014, p. 5). That is what configures the Tabletop aspect of these games, as players sit around in a table to play it together. What also sets RPGs apart from other game genres is the absence of winners and losers in the traditional sense. As explained by da Rocha (2019), “There are no fixed objectives in an RPG, nor there must be winners or losers: during an RPG match, players perform a variety of realistic tasks, together or on their own, as a means to solve a specific problem.” (DA ROCHA, 2019, p. 537).

A common conception of this genre of game is that different characters fall under a specific designation which will alter their abilities and skills. For example, in a

high fantasy setting, a character might be a mage, someone who does not have a lot of strength, but possesses powerful magical abilities, or even, a character can also be a fighter, a stronger person who uses weapons and fighting skills in combat, but cannot manipulate magic. This difference in character building is what makes the game challenging, mainly because players have to combine their character's talents so that they are able to overcome obstacles as a team.

Thus, all adventurers must come together to face those adversities and traverse the story created by one of the players, who is called the Game Master. Instead of creating a character, the Game Master (or GM) will create the world, the people and the outline of the story the characters will come in contact with. But since the players and their characters might come up with different and creative solutions to the GM's challenge and the success or failure of those solutions depend on the dice, the story has an infinite amount of variables.

An RPG player (and Game Master) will definitely be exposed to the most absurd and funny situations, but if the dice allow it, they will also find themselves in emotional, exciting, and preoccupying moments. In other words, a successful RPG experience will make players feel completely immersed in the story.

Finally, a last question arises: *how* can an EFL teacher find a way of utilizing TTRPGs in the classroom? Surely, this game can be organized according to several teaching methods, as well as a straightforward "just play it" style. However, a methodological approach which encompassed interactive, integrative, and collaborative approaches had to be prioritized. Firstly because in order for the game to work, it must involve the efforts of all students. And most importantly because, as explained in previous topics, it is via interaction and collaboration that the students will gradually become more motivated and desire to participate in the activities.

Therefore, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) was the method chosen for the template model later proposed in this work. The next section seeks to explain what is a Task-Based Approach as well as to detail its correlations with TTRPGs. This explanation is also carried out in order to justify the usage of TBLT as the chosen teaching methodology for the template.

5. METHODOLOGY FOR APPLYING TTRPGs IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

5.1 Task Based Language Teaching And Roleplaying Games

After debating on disadvantages of the PPP approach (Presentation, Practice, Production), Shehadeh (2005) defends the idea of Task Based Language Teaching, a method which is “based on a theory of language learning rather than a theory of language structure.” (SHEHADEH, 2005, p. 15). According to him, in this method, students come in contact with a context by interacting, communicating, and using the language right away. In other words, teaching via linguistic itemization is left aside in favor of a curriculum organized in tasks (LARSEN-FREEMAN and ANDERSON, 2011). In this method, learners are engaged in meaningful tasks, which enable them to interact communicatively and purposefully. (SHEHADEH, 2005).

Firstly, it is important to understand what exactly are “tasks”. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011, p. 192) defined tasks as having, “a clear outcome so that the teacher and students know whether or not the communication has been successful.” The authors give an example of a task in which students must prepare an itinerary of a trip, working in small groups to set timetables, destinations and shortcuts. In this way, they discover the process as they go, but they are also expected to ask for clarification and interact with their peers (LARSEN-FREEMAN and ANDERSON, 2011). This configuration also sets the stage for learners to collaborate amongst themselves, which as explained in previous topics, leads to student motivation.

Furthermore, Ellis (2017) explains the difference between real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks. The latter aims at performing authentic interactions, but “lacks situation authenticity”. In other words, in a pedagogical task, students interact in a situation which does not happen in real life, but they practice elements present in authentic communication, such as “turn taking and repairs of misunderstandings”. Meanwhile, real-world tasks are aimed at activities performed in the outside world, such as roleplaying a receptionist and guest at a hotel. (ELLIS, 2017). Which means that in the TBLT approach, performing and roleplaying in real-world situations to achieve certain communicative objectives are tasks.

Consequently, role playing games can also be configured to fall under this category. Even if playing the game is in itself a class activity/task, roleplaying the

situations in game as characters is really what emulates real-world situations. Imagine the characters (players) find themselves in a situation where, for example, they have to arrange a room in a tavern (a parallel situation to the common EFL receptionist/guest dynamic). But not only do player characters might have to perform tavern room bookings, but they may also have the need to interrogate murder suspects, negotiate peace among rival families, intimidate enemies, and an infinite amount of task possibilities. Ultimately, it will all depend on what the teacher/game master has in store for them, namely, the tasks (or in game slang, quests) available for the characters to choose to do.

At last, in order to provide a practical approach on Task Based Language Teaching, the next section of this work presents the Framework proposed by Willis (1996), which will be later used in the template for teaching English with TTRPGs.

5.2 Framework For Task-Based Learning

Willis (1996) organizes a Framework for Task Based Learning, where she separates the learning of a foreign language in three main stages: pre-task, task cycle, and language focus. A summary of this specific framework will follow to better explain how TBLT can be organized.

Firstly, Willis (1996) explains that in the pre-task stage the teacher introduces students to the topic, helping them understand the instructions by giving them context, and setting them up to perform the activity. In addition, the pre-task stage also introduces learners to the target language, that is, words and expressions commonly used when speakers are doing the task (WILLIS, 1996). After this, the teacher carefully explains the instructions for the activity as “they will want to know how they should begin, what each person should do, how much time they have and what will happen once they have finished.” (WILLIS, 1996, p. 44). The author suggests some strategies to successfully explain the task, such as, for example, playing an audio or video-recording of native/fluent speakers performing the activity.

The second stage explained by the author is the task cycle, which is divided into task, planning and report. While students are doing the task, the role of the teacher is to simply “stand back” and monitor, only interfering in case students are

“hopelessly stuck”. (WILLIS, 1996). After the task is completed, Willis (1996) advocates for the report phase, where students will have a chance to refine their language so they can present what happened during the activity to the rest of the class. In this way, according to her, learners develop their accuracy skills otherwise sidestepped during the task (in favor of fluency skills). However, the groups have time to plan their presentation before reporting, while the teacher takes up a slightly more active role, answering questions, but prompting learners to be independent (WILLIS, 1996).

Finally, the language focus stage (or consciousness-raising stage) comes towards the end of the process. It is at this level, according to the author, that the learners will study the language focusing more on the form rather than on the meaning. Students analyze and practice forms they have already got in contact with at the task cycle, but have not systematized yet (WILLIS, 1996). It is important to notice that the language material practiced in this stage do not stem from decontextualized examples, but from the productions and material students have made or studied during the task phase. Following this idea, Willis (1996, p. 114) states “In the texts that learners study we already have language which is contextualised, authentic and familiar to them. Why make up decontextualized examples?”.

The following table sums up what has been discussed by Willis (1996) as well as what has been explained in this section in terms of methodology in Task Based Language Teaching.

Table 1 - A framework for Task Based Language Teaching

1. Pre-task
Introduction of the topic and target language and detailed explanation of instructions for the main task.
2. Task-cycle
Task The teacher monitors students while they perform the activity, providing assistance only to better explain the instructions for the activity. The focus is on fluency.
Planning Students have time to organize themselves to retell their experience to the rest of the class. The teacher may provide more aid, but also encourage students to reach a solution by themselves.
Report Students have a chance to further develop their accuracy skills while they present their productions to the whole group.
3. Language Focus
3.1 Analyze Texts and material students are already familiar with are analyzed in terms of language form.
3.2 Practice Finally, students put their knowledge into practice, using patterns, words, expressions, etc. learned in the analysis stage.

Source: developed by the author based on Willis, 1996.

6. METHODOLOGY

This work aims to examine how Tabletop Roleplaying Games were utilized in the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language, with the objective to verify whether they were effective in motivating students.

So as to accomplish those goals, a bibliographical research has been carried out, analyzing three different case studies where TTRPGs were utilized in EFL classrooms. The works chosen for this study have been selected to represent a selection of distinct methods and approaches to using RPGs in EFL classrooms. In addition, different environments and subjects of research were also one of the selection criteria. Da Rocha (2019) details his experiences teaching English with

“Role Playing Games-based tasks” to Brazilian students at a language school. Araújo (2022) also works with Brazilian students, those who, however, study at a language program extension course at university. Similarly, Johnson (2021) also works in the university, but his students are undergraduate South Korean students.

A qualitative analysis of each case study has been carried out in order to investigate which teaching strategies using TTRPGs (a) most successfully involved students in the activity and (b) could have been done differently to achieve better results. In addition, it was also inspected (c) whether there has been a possible increase of student intrinsic and/or extrinsic motivation after the implementation of TTRPGs in the class.

Subsequently, using this analysis, it was possible to construct and put forward a model for teaching English as a Foreign Language using Tabletop Roleplaying Games as a resource. This model was based on what was deemed most successfully done by the researchers in the analysis, as well as based on the Framework for Task-Based Learning by Willis (1996).

7. HOW RPGs WERE USED: STATE OF THE ART

7.1 Experiment 1

In his work “Roll A D6: A Role-Playing Game Based Approach To The ELF Classroom”, Da Rocha (2019) studies the results of applying three “*RPG based tasks*” in a classroom of nine Brazilian teenagers, who were in their fourth semester at a language school.

However, before the author implemented the activities, he made sure to run through two phases: character creation and avatar making. Character creation is not a mandatory phase to go through in RPGs, since the Game Master (GM) may generate character sheets beforehand that the players can choose from. Nonetheless, according to Soares (2012), creating a character is part of making the game feel personal for the players, and especially for students, as they create a new identity as learners. This mental process of assuming a new identity also helps to decrease anxiety towards interactions in the EFL class (SOARES, 2012).

Da Rocha (2019, p. 536) reported giving as much freedom as possible to the students when character creation was concerned. The aspects the students were asked to create for the characters were: personal information, backstory, likes and dislikes, personality, and abilities.

“There were no restrictions concerning the characteristics learners should give to their characters. As long as they were careful enough to respect each other, they were free to use their creativity.” (DA ROCHA, 2019, 536).

Consequently, the students are able to connect with their creations and the activity becomes more engaging (see: SOARES, 2012).

The author then describes the three “RPG-based tasks” proposed during the classes. The first had the purpose of introducing their own characters to each other’s characters in a social gathering. In this activity, the teacher prompted improvisation and creativity. The instructions given are shown below:

“If during your interaction with the other people at the gathering you happen to be asked a question about an aspect of your character that you had not previously established, you should improvise. One of the key aspects of role-playing is improvisation.” (DA ROCHA, 2019, p. 542)

At the end of the task, the students reported feeling more confident and at ease to roleplay and speak in English. Additionally, the teacher could observe they developed fluency and accuracy in the target language. Thus, the first activity proved to be successful in introducing the learners to the concept of role playing and making them feel comfortable with interacting in English. The social gathering, or the party, was a neutral and low-cost environment where apparently all the characters did not know each other, so the characters (and consequently, the players) could easily achieve the task of introducing themselves and getting to know one another.

Another important observation is that as the teacher suggested improvisation as a possible resource, the learners could feel more prepared and confident in case they had not considered some of their character aspects beforehand.

Finally, this somewhat familiar and simple task can be seen as a first step into more complex activities involving roleplaying. As explained by Júnior (2018), students will feel more engaged and then desire to solve increasingly difficult problems and participate even more in the activity. And that is exactly what Da Rocha (2019) does in the next task.

The second activity introduced the concept of RPG gameplay properly, as the students had to survive a rainforest expedition. It was the task which was more action-focused and which used the character's skills the most. Divided in separate groups, players had to plan what limited items they were going to take with them, considering their colleagues' choices as well. In the camp, random situations happened as the students rolled a number on the twenty-sided die. The number corresponded to an inciting event, such as, *"Your friend is very sick. You need to cross the river and take him/her to the hospital."* for example.

According to the author, this *"more collaborative and problem solving situation"* invited his students to *"work collaboratively"* to successfully traverse this camping adventure. The teacher reported their awareness was raised on the importance of teamwork, as well as the students having better control over the language at the end of the task. Furthermore, Da Rocha (2019) also emphasized this activity encouraged planning and teamwork since students had to work together to overcome their difficulties, not only in the game, but also in language usage.

"[...] the students also learned about the importance of group work, which could be observed during the next classes: as learners seemed to be more aware of their classmates' limitations, they started to be more willing to help each other." (DA ROCHA, 2019, p. 544)

This previous passage indicates the proposed roleplaying task made learners reflect on their classmates' difficulties, going as far as helping each other out in future classes. Thus, this collaborative environment which started with an RPG session lasted throughout the lessons and helped the students to also be more involved in other activities.

At last, the final task proposed by the teacher was one where the students had to organize themselves to do a grocery shopping list, while also considering a budget

of four hundred Brazilian reais and their character needs and personality. As an introduction to Home Economics, the author states, the students felt more comfortable to plan the next grocery shopping alongside their parents.

Da Rocha (2019) also explains his students expanded vocabulary and grammatical structures such as quantifiers, and countable and uncountable nouns. In addition, even though the activity was important to help the students be aware of “*unnecessary expenses*” and the possibility “*to save money for future projects*”, its context was detached from the previous tasks and even so from the TTRPG genre.

While it seemed the tasks’ complexity was slowly increasing and the learners were appropriating what it meant to roll dice, to plan, to overcome obstacles as a team, and to consider their characters abilities and personality in a collaborative story, the last activity lacked continuity from what was being built.

The problem was that the characters did not appear to be involved in some sort of overarching narrative, where they would be asked to participate and create a story together. Instead, except for the second task, the activities seemed to propose clear communicational, grammatical, and vocabulary objectives. Clearly, these are far from being invalid activities, in fact, they prompted participation and both the students and the teacher reported good results. However, in order for these activities to become closer to the Tabletop Roleplaying Game genre, they could have been integrated in a more cohesive storyline.

7.2 Experiment 2

Johnson (2021) wrote the second case study analyzed titled “Playtesting Tabletop Roleplaying With First And Second Year Korean EFL University Students”. It was published in the Ludic Language Pedagogy Playground (LLP), a journal which exclusively publishes articles and walkthroughs about the usage of games in language teaching and learning environments. Johnson (2021, p. 1) defines his work as “an explanation, summary, and reflection on my use of tabletop roleplaying games with my first and second year EFL university students.”

Firstly, his observations were a result of an extra-curricular gaming club, which allowed the activity to be much more game-focused and allowed the learners to feel

less pressured to be accurate. He separated his students into two small groups which met four times and played for an hour each time, even though one hour is a short time in terms of EFL classes and TTRPG sessions.

As for his objectives, Johnson (2021) wanted to investigate student-to-student language assistance while the activity was being carried out. Also, the author sought to understand the students' organic grammar practice and vocabulary increase. Lastly and most importantly for the purposes of this work, he states that he wanted to develop his students' intrinsic motivation. This is done differently from what da Rocha (2019) has done, since he did not make this intention clear on his objectives, although the results inferred an increase in student collaboration, confidence and control over the language.

The author divided the activity in two stages. Similarly to da Rocha (2019), the first stage was character creation. In terms of gameplay, Johnson (2021) chose to use simplified rules of the Dungeons & Dragons game so the students could create their character sheets. As for personalization, the players created backstories for their characters, organized into past events, present habits / likes and dislikes, and future plans. As explained by the author, this allowed the teacher to observe grammatical points in a natural and organic way.

Additionally, this way of constructing a character backstory also made it possible for the students to get a feeling of their characters' personality and motivations, since they had a past story and future goal to be achieved, all of which help determine their choices. However, this character sheet could have added an exclusive section for *personality* as it was done in da Rocha's (2019).

Also, differently from da Rocha (2019), who chose avatar making as a preferred method, Johnson (2021) prompted his students to make a brief physical description for their characters. This description allowed more freedom in terms of fantastical physical appearances such as natural colored hair, colored eyes, etc.

The second stage Johnson (2021) went through with his experiment was actually playing the planned adventure. Divided into four sections, since the games were based on a fantasy setting, they were more adventure-like than the ones proposed by da Rocha (2019), while the survivability aspect remained. The overall

plot of the adventure was that characters shipwrecked on an island, where they had to survive by gathering resources and fighting against several creatures. In the end, they had to find their way back home.

Because the games were also less instruction-wise and more focused on student enjoyment, Johnson (2021) points out his difficulties in measuring grammatical practice and vocabulary increase. While opportunities were plentiful, the teacher reported that he did not give enough feedback, or at least not as much as he wanted to. Additionally, the author lacked pre and post activity tests, so he could not measure student development before and after the activity. At last, Johnson (2021) reports he could have developed some post-play activities. In fact, a language focus is exactly what is proposed in the TBLT Framework explained by Willis (1996), already detailed in this work.

Finally, as for intrinsic motivation, Johnson (2021) explains his students were eager to continue with this extra-curricular activity. According to him, his students enjoyed playing because they usually do not have this opportunity in Korean classrooms where instruction is usually “*top-down teacher centered*”.

“Instruction in Korea is often top down, lecture heavy, and teacher centered instruction, where students have no say in how things go. In TTRPGs, students have a huge impact on how the game plays out. One day I was leaving campus, walking out of the main gate, when I heard someone yell, “Professor!” It was Student 2A. She ran up to me, out of breath, and asked, “When are we going to do another gaming club?!” (JOHNSON, 2021, p. 90)

As seen above, the learners felt motivated to participate because knowledge was produced differently from the non-collaborative and traditional way they were used to. According to Johnson (2021), his students realized that they could have an impact and a saying on their own learning process and that is one of the main reasons this activity was enticing.

7.3 Experiment 3

In her work titled “Rolling Dice In Verona: RPG And Motivation When Teaching English Remotely” Araújo (2022) details her action-research teaching four students

using RPG in a Brazilian university extension course. Classes were online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a consequence, Araújo (2022) reports that her students were lacking motivation to actively participate. As she states, a teacher who had had a previous experience with the group mentioned “the students on the intermediate level were resistant to the realization of activities from the course chosen textbook, as well as the usage of the camera and microphone during the virtual classes.” (ARAÚJO, 2022, p. 205) ⁸

That is why, according to the researcher, she chose to make motivation the focus of her activities. In other words, Araújo (2022) observed her group lacked interest in the English classes, and after the same accounts from a previous teacher who had taught the same group, she decided to gather teaching strategies which could help those students feel more keen on learning English.

Her class was composed of four students aged ten to thirteen, and as mentioned above, they had online classes under a university extension course. Araújo (2022) planned six fifty-minute roleplaying game sessions spread out during the semester. The following extract details her goals during the activities.

*“The main objective here described was to seek student involvement in a series of activities which would assure them of language usage autonomy, and would invite them to participate and engage in the English language classes taught synchronously and virtually on Saturdays.” (ARAÚJO, 2022, p. 213)*⁹

As seen above, Araújo (2022) sought to encourage students in a collaborative class by giving rise to their autonomy, engagement, language usage and overall participation. The researcher then explains she suggested several activities that could help learners develop those abilities, and most importantly, which they could choose one from. Those activities were as follow:

⁸ TN: “[...] os alunos em nível intermediário eram resistentes à realização das atividades do livro didático adotado pelo curso, bem como ao uso de câmera e microfone durante as aulas virtuais.”

⁹ TN: “O principal objetivo do projeto aqui descrito incluía a busca pelo envolvimento dos alunos em uma série de atividades que lhes garantisse algum nível de autonomia na utilização da língua e os convidasse a participar e a engajar nas aulas de língua inglesa ministrada aos sábados de maneira síncrona e virtual”

“[...] comic strips workshop, social media usage, creative writing, video recording, and a book club. However, the role playing games’ appeal seemed more interesting to students who manifested a strong interest (sic) in trying this alternative.” (ARAÚJO, 2022, p. 206)¹⁰

Consequently, students had the power to choose from a variety of activities according to their own tastes and wishes. Having the possibility to choose their own activities encourages students to become increasingly more autonomous, besides making them feel like their opinions matter. In addition, it makes learners feel more engaged to participate in decision-making processes throughout the lessons, which then leads to an overall motivation to participate.

After students had chosen RPGs as the activity to be carried out during the classes, the teacher then asked in which setting they wanted to play. That is, what sort of story and world the players wanted to engage in. According to Araújo (2022), after some discussions, they agreed on working with the literary world in the work *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, mainly because they were dissatisfied with the play’s tragic ending. Consequently, an adventure set in the medieval Italian city of Verona was created.

It is noticeable that the teacher tried to seek the students’ opinions and empower them on the decisions regarding the activity. In this way, they could collaborate and contribute to make the classes feel more personalized and overall, more engaging.

Araújo (2022) then describes the first stage of the task, which was making students get in touch with the chosen setting in a variety of ways. Learners read extracts from the play, but also watched video summaries of the story, read adaptations, played *Romeo and Juliet* inspired games, and others. Only then did the teacher explain the game’s rule system which was going to be used; an adapted version of a simple science fiction D6 based role playing game.

Differently from Johnson (2021) and da Rocha (2019), Araújo (2022) presents students with the setting and the story of the game before introducing the mechanics

¹⁰ TN: “[...] produção de quadrinhos, uso de redes sociais, criação literária, gravação de vídeos e clube do livro, mas o apelo do “jogo de interpretação” pareceu mais interessante aos alunos que manifestaram enfático interesse na experimentação dessa alternativa.”

of it. This makes students feel interested in playing before being overwhelmed with rules, numbers, and instructions. Furthermore, the RPG system of choice was simple enough for students to focus on the creation of their characters in terms of story, personality and physical appearance.

Additionally, during the character creation phase, students also had to produce an introduction letter so they could participate in the Capulet ball (which happens in the first act of the play *Romeo and Juliet*). The author points out that introduction letters as a text genre had already been worked throughout the classes, so students could put their knowledge into use in a more practical way. Moreover, players could also appropriate what it meant role playing as their characters in a lower risk environment, having time to write and think about their characters' personalities.

The second stage described by Araújo (2022) was playing the game. The adventure was divided into five game sessions, which were structured in order to introduce narrative freedom to the students in an increasing way. That is, first the players had a limited amount of choices to act and their consequences were less varied, and at the end of the game, they had more freedom to act according to their desires and the consequences of those choices were much more plural. As she explains:

"I opted to present student-players interaction options in a growing curve, that is, their autonomy and freedom to act inside the fictional universe would be slowly expanded, keeping up with students' confidence to take the lead in the game. This resource would guarantee students the opportunity to experiment, in a dosed way, the consequences of their choices, and an autonomy they had not seized up until then. And as the game happened, they would also familiarize themselves with the rules and with the created characters." (ARAÚJO, 2022, p. 211) ¹¹

Similarly to da Rocha (2019), who increased gameplay difficulty from the first task to the second, Araújo (2022) takes this a step further by increasing the level of complexity of students' choices. As learners understand they can take up progressively more demanding challenges, and their choices will impact the game

¹¹ TN: "[...] optei por apresentar opções de interação em curva crescente para os alunos-jogadores, ou seja, sua autonomia e liberdade para atuar dentro do universo ficcional seria lentamente expandida, acompanhando a disposição e segurança dos próprios alunos em tomar a frente do jogo. Esse recurso garantiria aos alunos a oportunidade de experimentar, de maneira dosada, as consequências de suas escolhas, a autonomia da qual não vinha gozando até então, e o curso do próprio jogo, familiarizando-se com as regras e com o próprio personagem montado."

more and more, they will feel capable and engaged to accept the next task (see: JÚNIOR, 2018). Additionally, as they feel the fictional world reacting to their solutions, players feel like they matter in the story, but they also understand the importance of weighing their actions, since their choices can also have negative consequences.

“The role of the narrator-teacher is essential in this project not only to promote interaction and language usage opportunities, but to also involve students in the narrative, to provide reactions to the group's actions, to invite them to think critically about their decisions and, above all, to ensure the participants' well-being so that all have voice and action within the constructed narrative,” (ARAÚJO, 2022, p. 2013).¹²

In addition, throughout the gameplay the teacher offered puzzles which made sense in the narrative and where students used targeted language learned during the English classes. This gives students an opportunity to practice the language in a context which matters to them, and which feels authentic and real, since they are role playing as their characters.

It is important to mention that the teacher allowed the students punctual usage of the L1 when they were not able to express themselves, but offered rewards for speaking English. In this way, students were encouraged to use the language to have greater chances of succeeding in their actions (by rolling the dice with advantage). This type of encouragement caused by external factors stimulates student extrinsic motivation (see: BROWN, 2000; NG and NG, 2015) which if students fail to achieve, can then cause impediments on developing their intrinsic motivation (see: JÚNIOR, 2018). However, as there were no punishments for failing since students could still roll the dice (just not with advantage), this type of stimulus can make students encouraged to take risks and attempt to speak in the target language.

As reported by the author, at the end of each playing session, the students were asked to sum up their adventures for the day as well as making plans for the future. In this way, the teacher could sense what called students' attention the most during the session as well as prepare the next steps of the adventure.

¹² TN: “O papel da professora-narradora é essencial nesse projeto não apenas para promover as oportunidades de interação e uso da língua, mas também para envolver os alunos na narrativa, para proporcionar reações para as ações propostas pelo grupo, para convidá-los a pensar criticamente sobre suas decisões e, acima de tudo, para garantir o bem estar dos participantes a fim de que todos tenham voz e ação dentro da narrativa construída.”

Finally, after the sessions were over and the story was complete, a reflection about the experience was done in the form of a satisfaction survey. Araújo (2022) does not name this activity a post-task per-se, but it made it possible for students to voice their opinions about the project. The learners' sentiments were expressed by the author in the following passage:

"[the students] manifested positive feelings and demanded the continuity of the project in the following semesters. One of the students pointed out the project was a 'fun and amusing way to practice English', relieving them of the constant exhaustion they had been living during remote lessons. Another student stated the project was an opportunity to use English more and 'not being so shy' to speak in the classroom, besides being able to 'make the story the way I want to.'" (ARAÚJO, 2022, p. 214)¹³

Similarly to the experience Johnson (2021) had with his students, Araújo (2022) was also asked to continue with the project in future lessons. This indicates students found amusement in the activity and wish to carry on playing the game. Additionally, learners also expressed being more open to speak without being ashamed, which can be one of the biggest challenges a student has to overcome when practicing a foreign language.

As for the observations about the project made by Araújo (2022), the teacher responsible for creating and applying this activity, there was a constant student interest on game-related activities. The author exemplifies this by stating textbook activities were delivered less than RPG related activities, which were all sent and on due time. Furthermore, according to her, there were no absences on game days, indicating learners had a true wish to participate and be present during the realization of the activity.

In the next section, the main successful strategies used by the researchers in their experiments will be pointed out once again. This will be done in order to introduce the template of teaching EFL using TTRPGs as a motivational and collaborative resource in the classroom.

¹³ "[os alunos] manifestaram sentimentos positivos e demandaram a sua continuidade nos semestres seguintes. Um dos alunos apontou que o projeto era uma maneira "divertida e engraçada de praticar inglês", aliviando-os da sensação constante de exaustão que vinham enfrentando durante o período remoto emergencial. Outra aluna indicou que o projeto foi uma oportunidade de usar mais o inglês e "perder a vergonha" de falar na aula, além de poder "fazer a história do jeito que eu gosto"

8 TEMPLATE FOR TEACHING EFL USING TTRPG

To begin with, it was noted that Araújo (2022) most successfully introduced the story setting in which students were going to play the game. The author gave students options to choose from, but also encouraged them to think of alternatives. She also got them used to the setting, and to the story, before actually explaining the rules system and playing the game. That is why, in the template, the first task cycle – based on the framework proposed by Willis (1994) – is focused on Game Story Setting.

The second task cycle, on the other hand, is targeted towards Character Creation. This is done based on the strategies used by Da Rocha (2019), who gave students freedom to create their own characters, as well as on the strategies used by Johnson (2021) in terms of character sheet: students should describe their characters' backstory, present habits / likes and dislikes, and finally, their goals for the future. Additionally, students should also make a description of their characters' personality traits, inspired by what was done in Da Rocha's (2019) lessons. And finally, players should write about their characters' physical appearance, taking into account the story setting and their implications – if, for example, it is a magical or fantasy setting, the teacher could give students freedom to imagine new races and forms of life.

It is worth noting that it is during the second cycle that the rules system is firstly introduced while students are creating their characters. However, it is only on the third and last task cycle that the teacher should thoroughly explain how to play the game and guide students into what it means to roleplay, make decisions and roll the dice. This third cycle is the Adventure Time, where students are finally able to play the game. This stage was based on the strategies used by Da Rocha (2019) and Araújo (2022) as regards to the increased difficulty in game mechanics and the increased freedom of choice during gameplay respectively. In addition, Johnson's (2021) aspirations to introduce more grammar and vocabulary practice were also considered as teachers are encouraged to craft challenges in the narrative in which certain language structures will have to be used.

The model can be adapted for different class configurations and environments. However, the level of students considered for the template is B1 and above on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This is decided since students must have a certain level of fluency to defend their points of view, express their wishes, as well as recount past experiences and events. Additionally, a class of not more than ten students is advised for this model, although it can be adapted for larger classes.

8.1 First Task Cycle: Game Story Setting

The main objective during the pre-task stage is for the teacher and students to have a conversation about choosing a world to play in. The teacher can have one or two worlds as options to choose from, or simply as suggestions to model and make students think about different alternatives. Giving students limited options can be a positive strategy since the teacher can familiarize students with the chosen setting. This could be done similarly to what Araújo (2022) did with the play *Romeo and Juliet*. However, if students are given freedom to think about a different world, the teacher might not be so familiar with the setting. A solution to this would be to make students themselves present it to the teacher and those who are not familiar with it, encouraging learners to take charge of this responsibility instead of resting it only on the teacher's shoulders.

Additionally, giving students freedom to choose or even create their own story setting can be an engaging activity which will make them more interested and consequently care more about what is going to happen in the story. Similarly to having students create their own characters, choosing a setting will make the game feel more personal for students. That is why in the model the suggestion is for the teacher to give students as much freedom as possible when the story setting is concerned.

During the task phase, students create or choose their favorite option, but they also have to think of a way to explain their idea to the rest of the class. While they are discussing and deciding, they are certainly going to agree or disagree on some ideas. This type of language use is suggested as the focus of further activities since it

is a common and widely needed communicative skill, which is definitely going to be used on many occasions during gameplay and during the classes.

Table 2 - First task cycle

1. Pre-task
<p>The teacher tells the students they are going to play a game. In this game, both students and the teacher are going to create a story together.</p> <p>In this first task, the students are going to choose the setting of the story, that is, the world (place and time) in which the story is going to take place. Some examples/options can be given, such as settings from movies, TV shows, books, and products from pop culture.</p> <p>Another option is to give students freedom to create a world of their own imagination. Then, the most important topic students should consider is the story genre they wish to play, such as science fiction, fantasy, detective story, magic school, superheroes, etc – the possibilities are endless!</p>
2. Task
<p>Students are divided into small groups in order to choose or create their own story setting. The teacher monitors the activity, examining how students defend their arguments and consider their colleagues' point of views.</p> <p>Then, after each group has chosen or created a world where the story will take place, they are given some time to prepare a presentation about it. After the presentations are done, the whole class will vote for the best setting.</p>
3. Language Focus
<p>The teacher will then gather examples of language used in argumentation students have performed while discussing and voting the game setting. In addition, some other examples are also presented. It is also important to offer expressions of half-agreeing and politely disagreeing, so students are familiar with ways to keep the discussion flowing.</p> <p>In the practice stage, the teacher can offer topics students can debate in small groups to use these previously learned expressions.</p>

Source: developed by the author.

8.2 Second Task Cycle: Character Creation

The second moment is dedicated to character creation. It is important to notice that this moment can be divided into several different sessions with the students, since it might take some time to explain what creating a character means and how to

do it, as well as actually doing it. Additionally, the language focus stage can be rather extensive as many opportunities for grammatical, vocabulary, and communicative studies can arise from the completion of the character sheets.

Firstly, students are introduced to the idea of interpreting a character in the setting or genre they have chosen. If they chose a pre-existing world, it is important to explain that they do not need to (or they cannot, depending on the teacher's preference) interpret the pre-existing characters in that world. For example, if they are keen on the idea of creating a story in the Pirates of the Caribbean setting, a student should not or cannot be Captain Jack Sparrow. However, when creating a personality or story for their adventurers, they can and should be encouraged to draw inspiration from the characters they like or identify with, not only from this setting but from other stories they appreciate.

As for the mechanics for creating characters in terms of game rules, it will all depend on the game chosen by the teacher, since there are many alternatives. It is advised that easier and simpler roleplaying-focused systems should be prioritized to benefit beginner players. Some suggestions are games such as *Quest* (by The Adventure Guild), *Lasers and Feelings* (by John Harper, or adaptations from the same game), and one page RPGs such as *Crash Pandas*, *The Witch is Dead*, and *Honey Heist* (all by gshowitt).

Independently from the chosen game, each student will be in charge of one character if the class is small sized, however, if the class is big, a number of students can share the same character. Ideally, there must be a maximum of six or seven characters.

There are two options during the task phase as the teacher can either work with the character sheet as a whole or with each section from the character sheet at a time. The advantage of going with each section separately is that students can have the opportunity to work with many language focus activities for each section. In this way, they can refine their character sheet along the classes while learning how to use the language accordingly. If the teacher has available time to really carry out this activity, working with the character sheet section by section is preferred.

Some suggestions of language focus activities are as follows: for the

backstory section, the teacher can work with narrative tenses (past simple, continuous and perfect). For the present habits and likes / dislikes section, the present simple and continuous can be practiced. After finishing writing their characters goals for the future there is definitely room to work with the future tenses. Vocabulary can also be the focus with activities such as the personality and physical appearance section of the character sheet.

Additionally, after having completed the character sheet, the teacher is advised to suggest tasks related to the production of some text genres (letter, diary, autobiography, poetry, will, etc) so students appropriate role playing their character's personalities.

Table 3 - Second task cycle

1. Pre-task
<p>After the story setting is decided, learners are told they are also going to create the characters in the story. Some concepts of role playing games are also introduced. Since it is a game, each learner is going to be in charge of creating a character, but also interpreting this character in the story they will create together.</p> <p>During the task, the students will create the characters based on a character sheet proposed by the teacher. It is important to offer a model students can base themselves on. This model can be done by the teacher or found on the internet if a native speaker has shared their character sheet online. The students' characters' sheets should include a section for backstory, present habits / likes and dislikes, and goals for the future. Another section is dedicated to the characters' personality traits. And finally, a section for the characters' physical appearance.</p> <p>Additionally, students are given instructions on character creation depending on the rule system they have to follow.</p>
2. Task
<p>Students first debate their ideas in pairs, helping each other to come up with the concept for their characters. Then, they work individually in each section of their sheet. After finishing each section, learners should have some time to prepare so they can share their work with a classmate and/or with the whole group. The genre, length, and way this presentation is carried out is decided based on the students' needs and at the teacher's discretion.</p>
3. Language Focus
<p>After the completion of each section in the character sheet, the teacher is then able to work with a related language topic (previously suggested in this work) using</p>

examples from the sheets themselves. The task can then be repeated as many times as necessary while the students polish their work and make sure their character sheet is as good as can be.

Source: developed by the author.

8.3 Third Task Cycle: Adventure Time

The third task cycle is the last moment, but also the longest one. It is during this stage that the class finally plays the game. This cycle is also the broadest in terms of instructions since each game and its adventure is different and personalized based on the desire of the players and the Game Master (GM). The important thing to bear in mind while planning for the adventure is that it is a collaborative story. That means the GM will not have all the answers regarding the narrative's development. The role of the GM is to outline the main plot points and choices characters need to make. For the game to feel authentic, the GM will not need to plan for the consequences of player characters' choices, but improvise what will happen as the game is played. Moreover, they will also develop the non-player characters, which are the people characters encounter during gameplay, that is, villains, allies, townspeople, etc. Another major concern for the GM is not to overplan, since improvisation is also a great part of playing this game.

There are many different and effective ways one can develop their Game Master skills, and there are definitely an abundance of free online resources available for those who wish to learn and/or enhance their storytelling skills. And more importantly, each game system suggested in this work also offers overall instructions on how to build a basic plot to play and also how to practically and effectively guide players in the story (the most complete instructions are contained in the *Quest* book by The Adventure Guild).

Table 4 - Third Task Cycle

1. Pre-task

Now it is time to finally play the game. However, before students can sit around and play, the teacher should firstly explain the rules of the game. Then, the vocabulary and phrases that are necessary to play are clarified.

A video of native speakers playing the game is shown to the class. The teacher

pauses the video often and asks the students if they can identify and contextualize some of the language content. Finally, learners are asked about the rules and if they can recall the usage of at least one of them in the video.

2. Task

The teacher has prepared the adventure session beforehand. During game play, the teacher should slowly increase students' agency on the story as the choices become more open-ended and the characters progressively make more impactful decisions. In addition, learners' difficulties with language use are constantly being observed as well as their needs regarding vocabulary, grammar, communication, comprehension and production of language in general.

3. Language Focus

During the adventure, the Game Master should present challenges which take into account what students have been learning during their English classes. For example, if they are studying different kinds of food, the teacher could prepare an adventure which consists of a cooking competition, or a fetch quest where adventurers should gather different ingredients to prepare a magical meal. Additionally, the teacher uses their observations in terms of learners' difficulties in order to prepare focused activities which help students with real struggles and challenges. In other words, knowledge is constructed by observing students' language use in real contexts before actually formally teaching them.

Source: developed by the author.

CONCLUSION

This work first began as a nerdy teacher's attempt to understand how to utilize Tabletop Roleplaying Games (TTRPGs) in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Using games to teach languages is one of many well-researched and verified teaching resources available to EFL teachers. However, the free form nature of TTRPGs appeared to be significantly different from more subject-targeted EFL textbook game and role playing suggestions. Consequently, to what extent would students benefit from using this resource in the classroom? Logically, the reason why all teachers use games in their classes: to make students interested, to engage them, and to ultimately require their genuine and authentic participation. It is not because TTRPGs looked different from textbook game approaches that they could not possess the same objective: to motivate those students. That is why this work sought to answer if and how RPGs could be used as a tool for motivating EFL students.

In fact, student motivation was used as a central focus in this research as it was observed an overall lack of engagement in Brazilian EFL students, mainly those of public schools (see: BARCELOS, 2006 and CAVENAGHI, 2009). As part of an investigation to understand how to surpass this demotivating teaching and learning process, cooperative and collaborative activities were found to be an effective strategy (see: BROWN, 2020; NG AND NG, 2015; and MICHELON, 2003). In other words, it was observed that when students are encouraged to participate and help each other in the achievement of a common goal, they are not only more eager to engage in the activities but also more intrinsically motivated. It is then when games came into the discussion since they are a good (if not the best) example of those types of collaborative activities. And ultimately, out of many different games, the ones which entirely focus on collaboration and the resolution of challenges are the TTRPGs.

As a means to attest the effectiveness of applying TTRPGs in the EFL classroom, three researches were then analyzed with the objective to investigate whether there was an increase in student motivation after their implementation.

Results showed that in each case, students were not only able to feel more comfortable to communicate, but they also worked collaboratively to solve problems and to make decisions. Students felt they were in the center of the activities and had the opportunity to produce their own knowledge. Most importantly, researchers reported an overall interest in the activities as they consistently participated, delivered what was asked of them and later asked to carry on playing in future opportunities. In other words, it was noticeable that learners became motivated once they participated in this game.

Finally, the main successful strategies used by the researchers were gathered with the objective to produce an actual model instructing English as a Foreign Language teachers on how to use RPGs in the class. This model took the Framework for Task Based Learning by Willis (1995) as a methodological approach. This methodology was chosen for the model because the goal of Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is not to teach a specific set of grammatical structures, but to enable students to actually communicate and interact in the foreign language to achieve a meaningful

task. They must collaborate in groups and for most of the times, prioritize their fluency over their accuracy.

As regards to the proposed model for teaching EFL using TTRPGs, it will aid teachers who previously did not possess a practical instruction for using these types of games or were not familiar with the genre and could not apply it in any way. Besides, there is great potential in using an innovative teaching resource which has taken intrinsic student motivation as a guideline for its production. This model offers EFL teachers a managing format for an activity which encourages collaboration amongst learners, knowledge integration, student-student interaction, engagement, and an overall emphasis on making students feel empowered of their own learning process.

It is important to mention that further research must be carried out so as to verify the effectiveness of this model, since it has been elaborated as a suggestion; and as to this date, has not been tested yet. As any experienced teacher is aware, any lesson plan is never one which could not be messed with and enhanced after it is applied in a class. However, as any Game Master is also aware, unpredictability is what makes the experience the most fun you can ever have.

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