Vocabulary Relay Race
By Lauren Keys

This activity was created to teach students of beginner Spanish (Spanish 030) the vocabulary of the body and clothes.

Key Concepts:
♦ Vocabulary of body parts in Spanish
♦ Vocabulary of the face in Spanish
♦ Vocabulary of clothing in Spanish

Description of Activity:

This activity is set up in the style of a relay race. It may vary in length depending on the students speed to complete the activity and the number of groups within the class. However I would estimate about 20 - 25 mins. All that is needed for this activity is use of a black board, pictures of people (either magazine cut outs or printed from clip art), and some paper, pens and pencil crayons.

Divide the class in either two, three or four groups depending on class size (ideally no more than eight students per group). The activity will consist of four parts: 1) Simon Says, 2) Picture labeling task, 3) Sentence formation, and 4) Drawing task. So as not to waste time I would suggest that students decide amongst themselves which activity they are going to do before the race begins. They can decide from number 1 to 4 without knowing which activity is which.

In 1) Simon Says the instructor will be ‘Simon’ and will ask students to touch various parts of the body and face or clothing. All students may participate in this activity and the two (or three) groups will compete against each other. Once they complete the Simon Says requirements they will proceed to the black board for the 2) the picture labeling task. On the board will be a drawing of several faces and bodies with lines identifying what must be labeled on each of the pictures (there will be enough bodies and faces on the board so that all groups may complete this task simultaneously). The next step is 3) the Sentence formation activity. Here students can work together to form a list of ten sentences using the vocabulary learned. The verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to have’ may be repeated, but all nouns and adjectives may not. All ten sentences must be grammatically correct before moving on to the final stage of the race, therefore they must get approval from the instructor before proceeding. The last stage of this activity is 4) the drawing task. One student will be given a simple picture of a person. Their job is to describe the person to another student who will then have to draw what is being described to him. This picture will include colorful clothes. Cheating is strictly forbidden so if the ‘drawer’ is shown the picture, it is an automatic forfeit for that team.

The object of the game is simple; whichever team completes all four tasks correctly first wins. Small prizes may be given to winning team (optional).
Learning Goals:

The task is to help practice new vocabulary, in this case vocabulary dealing with body parts and clothing, however this can easily be substituted for other vocabulary being taught in the classroom. I designed this activity so that it would incorporate various teaching styles and various different types of learners.

The majority of the race is based on communicative style teaching method, which actively involves students in the learning process. Number 3, the sentence formation task, however, is based on a more traditional method and incorporates grammar and writing skills into the activity.

The relay race incorporates a combination of both individual tasks and teamwork based tasks. This way, students can work together and help each other to come up with the right answer, but it still allows for individuals to practice their skills and what they have learned without always relying on the help from others. (Teamwork is very important in languages; it gives students the opportunity to practice speaking with each other and try out new vocabulary and sentence structures. However, when the student is out of the classroom setting, they will not be able to rely on their classmate’s help or understanding; therefore I believe it is also important to practice individually).

This activity tries to account for the various types of learners in the classroom as well. The Drawing task and ‘Simon Says’ are for both bodily-kinesthetic and aural learners. The Picture labeling task is for visual learners, and the Sentence formation activity is for those that learn best by writing. It does not account for every type of learner in the classroom, but I did my best to design an activity that would incorporate the majority of students in the classroom.

I also like this activity because it can all be done without any English. I think we rely too often in the language classroom on translation. This activity does not require any translation or knowledge of English to do.

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This activity was designed for Spanish 030 students.