

How to use the card game BABALIBI

Purpose of the game:

BABALIBI is a learning game moderated by the teacher. The purpose of the game is to invent and tell crime stories in the target language. The building blocks of these stories can be found on the playing cards.

Language and level: target language, from level B1 upwards.

Different versions of the game are possible, depending on the level of the class and the time available.

1. Cards on the table
2. Rummy
3. Simulation of the case
4. Games according to the teacher's imagination

Cards:

People

1 Influential man or woman
1 Rich man or woman
1 Adventurer
1 Young man or woman
4 Witnesses

Case construction cards

4 *Motive* cards
4 *Circumstances* cards
4 *Secret relations* cards
4 *Alibi* cards
4 *Clues* cards
1 *Victim* card
1 *Perpetrator* card
2 *Joker* cards

The game: organisation and aim

Making use of the playing cards, the creating team invents a murder mystery which has to be solved by the detective team by asking specific questions.

The players negotiate possible ways of connecting the information on the cards and come up with a logical sequence. This is done:

- by preparing questions to be put to the creators.
- by a joint evaluation of the clues that are found.

It is up to the teacher to decide in how far the target language or more languages should be used in the process. The multilingual information on the cards should lead to a better understanding of the tasks and will contribute to enhancing language awareness.

1. Cards on the table

In this version of the game the victim is determined before the start of the game. Following the indications on the squares of the game board, a murder mystery is constructed and solved. There are no winners or losers.

The class is split into two groups: the creators who create the case and the detectives, who must solve it by addressing questions to the creators.

Creators: Four groups are formed (the number of players per group will depend on the size of the class). Each group appoints a speaker. They agree on the most important aspects of the case and receive five cards:

1 Person; 1 Motive; 1 Circumstances; 1 Secret relations and 1 Alibi.

In principle any person can be a suspect, since they are all connected to the victim and other people in some way, they may have secret relations and/or have a possible motive for the crime. For the interrogation at the end a binding sequence is laid down.

Detective: at least four players. Each player receives 4 *clues* cards and 4 *witness* cards (which they select from the group of creators. On top of those, the detective group also receives the 2 *jokers* and the *perpetrator* card.

Procedure (duration: 60-90 minutes)

Creators:

The creators first decide on the victim and describe him/her more precisely (age; sex; special distinguishing features; habits; where the body was found and how the person had been killed).

The detectives receive this general information immediately and start developing questions and hypotheses (space permitting, preferably in an adjoining room). The group may be subdivided into inspectors and journalists, which will lead to the formulation of different kinds of questions.

In the meantime, the creators refine the case and alternately put a *person* card on the game board and specify short biographical information. The cards are placed on the game board in the prescribed order and include in their statements clues provided by the other members of the group, so that roles, motive and cross-connections gradually become clear. The information on the multilingual cards must be included unchanged. More freedom is allowed with the clues on the other cards if this helps to make the story more coherent. In order to complete the narrative, players take turns putting down the motive cards, explaining why each person might be suspected of committing the crime. Eventually the groups determine the perpetrator by agreeing on the most credible story. This story can later be presented to the detectives in an appealing manner, for which it may be helpful to make a short written summary.

The detectives

They return to the board and begin their investigation. They put questions to the suspects and select four witnesses from among the creators who have received a corresponding card and who must answer truthfully. They report on the clues they have found and establish a general outline of the case, which they then comment upon and complete by formulating hypotheses. Gradually the missing links in the investigation are found. The use of the *joker* allows for changes necessary to arrive at a more logical chain of clues. Moreover, the *joker* may help to elicit more honest (i.e. unambiguous) responses from the creators. The game is over when the detectives declare a person guilty and arrest him/her.

Further tips

- For each round of the game students should invent a typical crime story title.
- Students could be asked to produce a record of the investigation or a chronicle of events.
- Language variation: The witnesses might speak another language – either one of the languages on the cards or another language that they know. This will force the inspectors to find the necessary tools to understand the witnesses' statements. In this situation a *joker* can be used to translate the text.

2) Rummy - the victim emerges in the course of the game.

The purpose of this version (in four teams) is the coherent and consistent construction of a criminal case with the various people involved. The team captain gets four cards (for the different roles, including victim and perpetrator), so that a pile of sixteen cards remains on the table. The team captain draws a card and discusses it with the rest of the team. Then s/he puts one or more cards on the table and starts telling the story. The others gradually build up the story making use of the information previously provided

- a) Whoever has a series of cards with which s/he is able to report on the case in a coherent manner, may start.
- b) The victim and the perpetrator are determined on the basis of the cards drawn.
- c) The team that can put all the cards on the table and has solved the case is the winner (even though some cards may still be on the pile).
- d) The different categories of cards can be given a numerical value before the beginning of the game, for example 4 points for the persons, 3 for the witnesses, etc. Players who still hold cards in their hands when the game is over will get minus points for those cards.
- e) The *joker* can be used for each category of cards.

3) Full simulation of the case

To be organised according to the teacher's own ideas.