



EMILY HARRIS/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

**PRACTICING PORTUGUESE:** Pulp and Paper manager Judson Fidler reads aloud to instructor Lied Santos.

## Language school brings lessons to the office

■ As business with Latin America increases, more South Florida workers are eager to learn Spanish or Portuguese. This school offers lunch-time lessons.

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For most people, lunch time is an occasion to take a break from a busy day, dine with friends and colleagues or run personal errands. But for co-workers Judson Fidler, Jehan Said and Eduardo Melendez, lunch é hora de falar português (is time to speak Portuguese).

"Learning Portuguese will help me communicate with my colleagues in Brazil," said Fidler, 33, who works as a technical customer service manager for Pulp and Paper, a company headquartered in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with offices here in South Florida.

With the emergence of Latin American industries, many South Florida execu-

tives are finding it necessary to learn Spanish and Portuguese to better interact with their South American counterparts.

Twice a week, Fidler, Said and Melendez attend classes in their company's conference room. Their instructor, Lied Santos of inlingua Learning Centers, arrives with a lesson plan that immerses her students in Portuguese.

Inlingua has nine language centers around the state, seven of which are in South Florida. In all, it employs 200 instructors around Florida.

Classes are mostly conducted in the target language to encourage full immersion and prevent students from using their native language as a crutch. Fidler, who took

## With help from inlingua, lunch becomes a foreign excursion

four years of Spanish in high school, prefers this method.

"When I was in high school, the books were written in English and Spanish. The books I have now are only written in Portuguese, so you have to use the visuals to remember and that works better for me," he said.

### NEXT BEST THING

Many linguists say the best way to learn a language is to live in a place where the language is spoken. But for people like Fidler, who is married with two children, that's not so easy. Instead, he and classmates find time from their busy schedules to practice with each other and their Brazilian colleagues. They also immerse themselves in Brazilian culture by watching Brazilian TV shows and films, and reading Brazilian newspapers and magazines.

"Inlingua's training programs provide the best alternative [to relocating] by re-



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**NO TIME TO RUN ERRANDS:** During their lunch hour, Pulp and Paper employees Jehan Said, left, and Eduardo Melendez practice their Portuguese.

creating this process in the classroom, forcing students to use only the target lan-

guage to communicate their thoughts," said Richard E. McDorman, director of pro-

grams and professional development at inlingua Language Centers.

The school aims for students to achieve conversational fluency. Unlike other programs that stress memorization or use mnemonic methods, inlingua avoids rote memorization and encourages students to experiment. The teacher acts as a guide, leading discussions and activities.

### ROLE PLAYING

Some time is designated for practicing real-life scenarios in the target language, including business expressions and terms.

Such exercises have proven beneficial to Fidler, who can now e-mail his colleagues in Sao Paulo in limited Portuguese as well as use industry-related terms, such as *alvura*, to refer to the brightness of paper.

"My colleagues say they see an improvement in my Portuguese. I can at least speak a little with them and perhaps speak much more when I travel there," Fidler said.