



What is this Dancer Doing?

Lara Gerstein

This lesson was originally designed for ESL students with many different native languages and at various different levels of English proficiency, in a beginning dance class at Newcomers High School. The game structure was developed at Quest to Learn (www.q2l.org).

The main idea can be easily adapted to many different contexts. Specific language structures and vocabulary can be posted while students are playing the central game or the game can be an opportunity to allow language to bubble up more spontaneously before clarifying language structures afterward (and then playing the game again with more success).

Some possible adaptations and further developments of this lesson are included in the last section.

If you have questions about how to implement this lesson or would like to share your own adaptations of it, please contact me at laramuse@earthlink.net.

CONTENT OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

Gain new English vocabulary and practice using it in context.

Understand that specific vocabulary is necessary to be clearly understood.

Gain new movement vocabulary and practice using it.

Self-assess and self-correct their usage of spoken English directions.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Within a game-like structure, students will use each other as resources to develop English vocabulary around body shape & movement.

LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES (PART 1-THE WARM UP)

Language Functions	Language Structures	Key Vocabulary
Analyzing	What is s/he doing with her/his _____?	Head, neck, shoulder, arm, elbow, wrist, hand, fingers, chest, back, hip, leg, thigh, knee, ankle, foot, toes
Describing	S/he is _____.	Sitting, standing, lying
	S/he is _____ her/his ___ (body part) ____.	Bending, turning, raising, lowering, putting, touching

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LANGUAGE OBJECTIVES (PART 2—THE GAME)

Language Functions	Language Structures	Key Vocabulary
Directing	<p>_____ your ____ (body part)_____.</p> <p>Move your ____ (body part)_____ to the _____.</p> <p>Put your ____ (body part)_____ _____ your ____ (body part)_____.</p> <p>...as if you were _____.</p>	<p>Bend, turn, raise, lower, put, touch</p> <p>Left, right, up, down, back, front</p> <p>Under, over, through, next to, on, in front of, in back of.</p>
Questioning (by the actors)	<p>What should I do with my ____ (body part)_____?</p>	<p>Head, neck, shoulder, arm, elbow, wrist, hand, fingers, chest, back, hip, leg, thigh, knee, ankle, foot, toes</p>

MATERIALS

Images of people in dynamic positions with clear body shapes. There should be at least three different images per group of 6 students. Ideally, these all have the same backing and are hidden from students until they choose one from a pile of images that are laying face-down.

THE SPACE:

Plan ahead of time how to use the teaching space. Where they will go in threes to not be observed too much by other students? Where will the groups of six go where there is room for three to be at a bit of a distance from the other three? If space is very tight, or full of furniture, then choose images of people sitting in chairs or making shapes with their limbs close to their torsos.

MOTIVATION/PRESENTATION

Teacher demo: Show a large image of a dancer that everyone can see. “What is s/he doing?”

Post a chart:

Body parts(Nouns)

Actions (Verbs)

Other Words

Ask the following questions to elicit words to fill in the chart.

- What body parts are most important to this shape?
- What is the dancer doing with those body parts? (Ex: What is she doing with her leg?)
- Where are the body parts? (Ex: Where is her knee? Is it under? Over? Next to? etc.)

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Fill in four or five entries in each column. When the students seem to understand how to use the chart, say,

“We’re going to play a game. We need one person to close their eyes (or turn away) while we look at a picture. Is there someone who can help us? Great, so Rebecca, please turn around. Thank you.”

To the rest of the class say, “Let’s look at a new picture. (Show image)

After everyone has seen the picture, say, “What can we say to Rebecca to help her make this shape?”

- Prompting here will depend on your students. For more reticent students, having the language structures posted can be useful.)
- As students give directions you or a student should record the directions under or near the vocabulary chart so the other students can use them as reference for offering their own directions
- If a student wants to give a direction but doesn’t know the correct word in English, this is an opportunity to explain how to ‘research’: “If you don’t know the word in English, first ask someone else in class. If they don’t know the word, use your dictionary. If you still can’t find it, raise your hand to ask me.”

Once Rebecca is in the shape, say, “Let’s give Rebecca a round of applause for being so brave! (Rebecca sits with the other students) This is how we will play the game with teams of three:

The Goal of the game is to direct another student(s) to make a very specific body shape.

The Challenge is to be as specific as possible and to not give up!

The Rules of the game:

The Warm-Up. Each team takes a secret picture. and writes down all of the words that they see in the picture on a vocabulary chart. The director writes down some directions the team comes up with that they can use to help someone make the shape they see in the picture.

The Game Two teams place themselves at a small distance from each other One team directs first, the other team members are the “actors”.

The **Director** gives the written directions one at a time and members of the other team follow them as best as they can. The **Secretary** records any additional directions that need to be given. If a word needs to be researched, the **Researcher** writes down the words s/he has found. (see above)

When the shape has been reached to the satisfaction of the directing team, the teams switch roles.

Remember to use only English words. No gestures!

Be respectful—treat the students you are directing the way you would want to be treated.

PRACTICE/APPLICATION

Students come to a central area to pick up images which are laying face down and return to their teams to do their “warm up” without letting other teams see their image. After a predetermined amount of time, two teams meet and play begins. The teacher should determine which teams will partner with each other and how much time will be spent on each image.

CLOSING

Students come back to teacher-led discussion and report on new vocabulary, directions or anecdotes. Some possible prompts:

“Who had to make a really difficult shape? What did you have to do?”

“Did anyone have to move their fingers (toes, nose, eyebrows, etc. Use something small or unusual overheard during play)?”

“Let’s hear one direction you gave from each director (or secretary, or researcher).”

On big paper, the teacher, or the students themselves can chart and post their new vocabulary.

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ASSESSMENT

The worksheet can serve as an assessment for the group. And for each individual if the roles are adhered to.

Also, as students work, the teacher can note:

1. Which sentence structures the students are using.
2. How long it takes for each actor to arrive at her/his shape.
3. How students use their resources for finding the correct vocabulary and which ones they use.
4. How students interact with each other and deal with the frustrations they will inevitably come up against. Do they “cheat” by breaking the rules of the game? Do they argue with each other? Do they become silent when they don’t immediately know a word or do they search for new ways to say what they mean? Do they direct/take direction respectfully?

Appendix A

The Images

The images communicate much more than body shapes to the students. Choose images consciously. (If students balk in the middle of a lesson, for example about the dancer being a girl and the actor being a boy, remind them that they are looking for the shape the person is making and that all kinds of people are capable of making the same shapes with their bodies.)

Age: Younger children may respond more easily to people their own age. High Schoolers may respond more to young adults.

Gender: Have images of men & women, boys & girls to choose from.

Culture: Have many cultures represented in the images.

Medium: The images can be paintings, sculptures, cartoons, stick figures, anything that clearly represents body shapes.

Appendix B

Adaptations

Art: Introduce a painting or a painter by using paintings, or sections of paintings as the images.

Social Studies: Introduce a time period, with images of people from that time period, doing things that people did.

ELA: Use any work of literature with associated images. Discuss how characters felt and what they were thinking at the moment these images happened. Have students in the shape speak about the experience of the character they are embodying. Ask them or the other students, “what happened right before this moment?” “What could happen next?” “What if we moved this character from here to here?” (Ask student to move to a different place in the room, while maintaining their shape)

Physical Education: Use images of someone playing the sport you are teaching at different moments in the action.

For Lower-Level Class, or Younger Children: The entire lesson can be teacher-led with a few actors in the front of the room and the rest of the class as the directing team. There could be a “committee” of Directors, one of “Secretaries” and another of “Researchers”.

For Limited Movement Ability: Use images of people in chairs. Focus on facial expression, or positions of hands or only which body parts are involved and not how specific the shape is.

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For Very Limited Language Abilities: Begin with just the body parts and limited vocabulary charts: One student can be responsible for naming body parts and another for directions (up, down, side, front, back). They can have pre-printed lists of vocabulary with accompanying images.

Appendix C

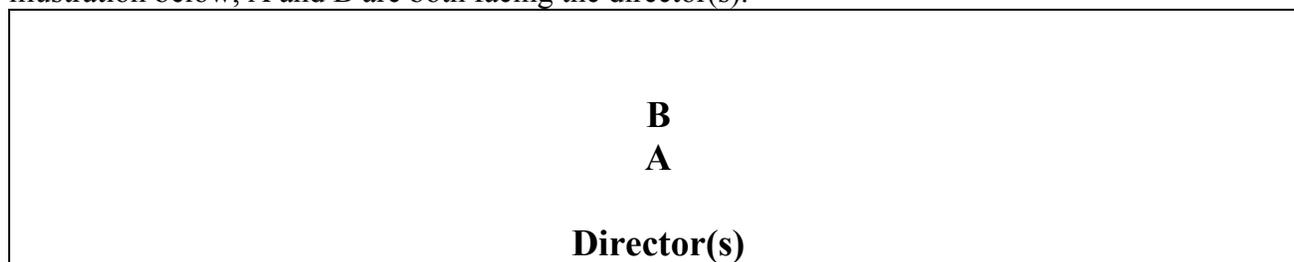
Further Developments

Taking it into Writing: Students use the vocabulary and the sentences they have recorded to write about the experience. (Ex. I bend my knee. I lift my head. I raise my arm.)

Interviews: Students ask each other “What did you do?” (Ex. I bent my knee, then I lifted my head, then I raised my arm.) They can write, videotape, or voice-record their answers. This can also become a report back to the class.

More Complex Games:

1. Have one student stand behind the other student both facing the same direction. In the illustration below, A and B are both facing the director(s).



B makes and holds a shape (that **A** can't see)

A is the actor

Director (s) give directions to **A** so s/he looks like **B**

2. Once actors are in the shape, Directors direct them to move. (Ex. “Shake your left arm”, “Reach with your left foot”, “Step forward”, “Swing your leg”, “Hop!”)

3. Images of multiple people can be used with the same number of actors. The prepositions would then refer to relationships between people as well as body parts.

THE WORKSHEETS

The team worksheets can be used as they are and students can be asked to share a worksheet with their teammates and to write only in their own section or in whatever section is applicable. The worksheet can also be reformatted into four parts so the team shares Part 1 but then each has their own for their role in Part 2

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Team _____

Secretary _____

Director

Researcher _____

Image #1: What do you see?

Body parts (Nouns)

Actions (Verbs)

Other words

#1 Director: What will you say? (Example: Put your hand on your head)

#1 Secretary: What else did you have to say?

#1 Researcher: What new words did you find?

What is this dancer doing?

Team _____

Secretary _____

Director

Researcher _____

Image #2: What do you see?

Body parts (Nouns)

Actions (Verbs)

Other words

#2 Director: What will you say? (Example: Put your hand on your head)

#2 Secretary: What else did you have to say?

#2 Researcher: What new words did you find?