

Freeze Frame: Using Frozen Tableaus to Crank Up the Comprehensible Input in Language Classes

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Freeze Frame is a fun, interactive way to review a story and provide Comprehensible Input by assigning to students to groups that create physical depictions of scenes from a story (short film, class story, novel, etc.) in ‘freeze frame’ vignettes.

THE ACTIVITY

Freeze Frame is very simple. It requires no preparation, making it an ideal activity to use immediately after reading or listening to a story in class.

First, select 8-10 scenes from a story or text. The best scenes to use are ones that are unambiguous—moments from the story in which it is very clear what is happening. You (the teacher) can plan which scenes to use ahead of time, or you can select them upon completion of the story.

Once the scenes are selected, divide the class into groups. The groups should contain the number of characters needed to depict the scenes plus one additional student. For example, if there are 3 characters in most of the scenes, there should be 4 students in each group.

With students standing beside their group-mates, read aloud one of the scenes to the class and wait for 30 to 60 seconds for all groups to create their unique vignette depicting that scene. The extra student in the group should play the role of the director, arranging his or her group-mates to form a beautiful frozen moment.

After most groups have finished setting up their frozen moments, stop them and ask the director of each group to snap a photo of his/her group and send it to you. These images will be projected and discussed with the class at a later date. If this is not a realistic possibility, then you can unfreeze all but two groups and draw the attention of the ‘thawed’ students to the two groups that remain frozen. With the thawed students looking on, compare and contrast the two frozen groups’ depictions of the scene at hand, providing comprehensible input while comparing and contrasting the details of each scene.

Finally, ask all groups to select a new director/photographer (so that the same student doesn’t play the role of the director for all of the scenes), and read a new scene to the class. Repeat the entire process for each of the scenes that you have prepared.

THE ACTIVITY...WITH A TWIST

Freeze Frame is a highly adaptable activity, which is of great benefit to teachers who strive for novelty in their classes. By putting a slight spin on the basic Freeze Frame activity, you will be able to use it many times throughout the school year without diminishing the level of engagement that students experience.

Frozen Frame-Off

Divide the class into 2 teams, and bring up a set of student actors and a director from each team. Show the scene description to the directors, but do not show it to the actors or the other team members. The director must physically manipulate the actors' bodies to form the freeze-frame vignette. The director can only give physical commands *in the target language*, like "Move your leg," "Raise your right arm," etc. Each actor in the group has one opportunity to guess which scene they are forming. For example, a group of 3 student actors will have 3 opportunities to correctly guess the scene. The first actor who guesses the scene correctly earns a point for his or her team. The team members who are *not* participating in the creation of the vignette can shout out suggestions to the actors in the target language as to which scene is being depicted, but a guess only becomes official when it is made by one of the actors. Each actor can only make one official guess. Once a team runs out of guesses or the other team correctly guesses the scene before it, that team cannot earn a point. As always, photograph the scenes before bringing up a new group of student actors for the next round of the competition.

THE ACTIVITY...AND BEYOND

The activity is over, and your inbox is filled with the photographs of the scenes that your students created. Now what? Use them to generate more comprehensible input, of course! Here are a few ideas:

- Project the images to the class one by one. Take time to describe each image in detail. As you do, ask questions and provide repetitions of the target structures, use comprehension checks to assess students' understanding, and connecting the descriptions to your students' lives by asking personalized questions.
- Play "**Pick the Pic**" (martinabex.com/2013/02/13/pick-the-pic/), or use it as a listening assessment.
- Pair up students and distribute one of the images to each pair. Have the pair of students work together to write an alternate story explaining what is going on in the picture: an explanation that is different than what actually happened in the story but still makes sense based on that image alone.

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