Say “Cheese!” Abair “Cáis!”
Using the photographers' studio to learn Irish.

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In my classes I like to have a section devoted to the students making use of the vocabulary which they have recently studied in a role play or communication game. These games check to see if students have learned the vocabulary properly; that they can recognize the spoken word of one of their peers rather than simply recognize the written word or the words as spoken by their teacher.

Preparation:
Students must have studied:

- The parts of the body
- The imperative form of the most used verbs, how to use it to give an order
- Simple vocabulary relating to homes, furniture etc.
- Usage of some compound prepositions and the inflexions they might cause
- How to address somebody properly in Irish, say please, thank you
Requirements:

A selection of group photographs. In each photograph the group should be arranged differently.

The Activity:

• The class is divided into the photographer and his or her subjects.
• The photographer is given a sample photograph of a group of people and his objective is to arrange his group according to the photograph.
• The photograph should have the same number of people in it as are in the group.
• The photographer is not allowed to show the photograph to the group nor is he allowed to indicate what he wants with his hands. He must direct with speech alone. It is an oral exercise for the photographer and a listening exercise for the group.
• The photographer should address each member of the group by name and in the correct form. A Mhicil, A Shiobhán etc.
• When the photographer has the group arranged to the best of his ability he will say Abair “Cáis!” This means Say “Cheese!” and it indicates that he is finished.

The rest of the class enjoy watching the role play particularly if they can see a copy of the photograph on a screen in the classroom so they can see what the photographer is trying to achieve. The group being arranged should not be able to view it. This role play can be adapted for use in different levels of class from beginners- and mid-level classes right through to advanced classes. It can be adjusted to suit the class.

Adjustment Examples:

Beginner level has simple poses. Not too much interaction between the members of the group.
Advanced level has much more complex poses and greater interaction between the members of the group. The photographer should incorporate any grammatical changes, inflexion, caused by the use compound prepositions into his directions.

Teacher Requirements for this role play.

- The role play requires a stock of photographs. Photographs may be found online or one can easily make one’s own, which I do.
- Know how many are in the class and have some photographs featuring the correct number of people.
- Know the level of Irish of the class and make sure to match the photograph and the class correctly.

Benefits and Results:

- Students are listening to a peer speaking to them in Irish
- The photographer must be precise in giving directions
- The activity is engaging not only for the group involved and their photographer but also for the rest of the class who may be awaiting their turn to perform.
- The students are actively involved in communicating in Irish with one another.

Variations:

If the class is composed of two or three groups of 7 or 8 students then each group can create a photograph as homework which one of the other groups must reproduce during class. In order to avoid a too complicated pose the group presenting the photograph must be prepared to demonstrate its re-creation. Photographs can be easily taken and emailed to the teacher before class to check their viability for the exercise. Famous works of art can be used as inspiration by the students.

Involvement of the students in planning and executing classroom activities leads to a very positive learning atmosphere.