

Tongue Twisters [lesson plan]

I so much wanted to seriously practise pronunciation in my classroom while keeping it light and funny. I remembered I used to practise speaking English through Tongue Twisters while I myself was still at school.

Nowhere could I buy a deck of cards containing tongue twisters. So I made my own deck, writing down the ones I was taught and which I still remembered. I also asked around and searched the Internet. I typed everything out, pimped it a bit and fabricated a cover. Then I cut out cards and covers, stuck them together and laminated all of them.

Below you can see how I use them in my classes. They are so much fun to work with and produce so many good results, that I thought of sharing them with my colleagues.

Aim:

- To improve pronunciation, rhythm and stress
- To have fun while learning
- To take away fear of talking [everyone makes mistakes pronouncing these tongue twisters, so what the heck, you won't stand out if you have a go].

Meant for: ALL LEVELS [the tongue twisters range from very easy to really difficult – there's something in this pack for students of all nationalities: RALPH RAKES LEAVES REALLY, REALLY LOUSILY – is of course more difficult to pronounce for someone with an Asian background than for someone with a Northern European background, and you, being a teacher, will be able to assess what your students need]

How to play:

1) Every week I give my students one Tongue Twister to practise on. They copy it. I will pronounce it first very slowly to familiarise the sounds. I'll ask them if they understand it and I will explain the meaning of words they might not know. Then I will say it out loud again and the students will repeat it all together. We do this for three or four times.

Next step: the students pronounce the tongue twister together for two or three times. In this way they get used to saying it. If they have any difficulties, feel a little awkward or shy, if they mispronounce anything, no one will notice. It will also give them the chance to right their mistakes.

After this phase I ask for a volunteer to pronounce it on his own with the others listening in. Students will have to say it three times and fast, making no mistakes. This always results in a lot of laughter and admiration for those students who are able to pull it off without making any mistakes.

My students practise the tongue twister at home in order to be able to deliver it without any mistakes.

During the following week I start off every lesson with a few students pronouncing the tongue twister. They love doing this! Their pronunciation is slowly improving. They think it's great and they laugh a lot.

Each week they'll practise a new one.

2) About once every two months we play a card game in class. Every tongue twister they've practised so far, will end up in the deck of cards they're playing with. On top of that I add a few they have never seen [about five new ones in total – three easy ones and two difficult ones].

They form groups of five and start playing. The pack of cards is shuffled and put face downwards on the table. The youngest one starts and from him/her on, we play clockwise. The one who picks up the card lays it out open on the table for everyone to see. Then he/she has to say it out loud for three times, without any pauses and making no mistakes. If he/she succeeds he will get to keep the card. The player who collects the most cards wins. [I have a small prize for those who do]

3) Sometimes I have a competition in class. I divide the class into two groups. We play with the complete deck of cards, so including the ones they've never seen or practised and which could be way above their level.

We toss and then I turn the first card. I won't let anyone see what it is. I give it to the group. They read it in silence and discuss among each other who is going to try and pronounce it three times, quickly, without any mistakes. That student has a go. If he/she succeeds he will score 3 points. I will pick the second card and the whole procedure is repeated for the second group.

However, if a student fails in pronouncing the tongue twister three times, quickly, without any mistakes, the second group may try. They cannot have a look at this card. They may not decide among

themselves who is going to do it. I need a volunteer right away. The first one who raises his hand is going to perform. When he succeeds, he will score two points. They are allowed to proceed onto the next Tongue Twister. [No matter if the attempt failed or succeeded]

Have fun and enjoy.
I truly hope you will.

Yvonne Langbroek