

PRONUNCIATION CHALLENGE

► INTRODUCTION

I have chosen to present an activity on pronunciation as I've really decided to spend more time on it in class this year, trying to make it fun! (and more efficient)

I will also talk about cooperative learning as it's a way of working that I use a lot in class because I find it really motivating for the pupils.

The class I worked with is a class of beginners (6e) with 21 pupils.

In the classroom, they are divided into 5 groups of 4 or 5 students.

► OBJECTIVES :

- Differentiate 4 different ways of pronouncing 'a'
- Encourage team learning
- Have fun !

► DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRST SESSION

1. We started working from a poem which I read to the pupils.

Here it is :

Kate's cat is a star !
He's as brave as dogs are !
And he's got a black hat !
His best pal is a rat !
Never pale, never scared
Oh yes, he doesn't care !
And at night, in his car
Yes he stares at the stars
And he plays the guitar !
Yes ! Kate's cat is a star !

The pupils had to classify the words according to the four different sounds for 'a'.

From this classification, we started looking at the common points between the words belonging to the same group: for example, the pupils noticed that all the words where the 'a' was pronounced [a:] were written with 'ar' at the end.

2. But what does this poem mean ?

The poem was accompanied by some drawings to help the pupils understand it.

By groups, they had to work on 4 lines of the poem each, checking that they understood its meaning.

For that, I used the Think Pair Share technique which is simply a three-step cooperative structure: they first think individually, then share their answers and hypothesis with a partner and then with the other members of their group. And then, we check with the whole class.

3. Back to pronunciation :

I wrote on the board 2 lists of words and they had to reflect on them : the magic « e » !

cat Kate star stare
pal pale car care
hat hate scar scared

After that, we practised pronouncing the words individually first and then in the poem.

4. Creation of tongue twisters

To finish with, I helped them to create tongue twisters :

- Kate's cat hates hats
- I don't care about cars, I stare at the stars.

HOMEWORK: practise reading the poem at home and pronouncing the words

► ACTIVITY (second session): Pronunciation challenge

I wrote a list of words on the board:
black/cat/star/hate/Kate/guitar/care/scared/brave/pale/pal/car

1. Time for training

The pupils had 5 minutes to train helping each other on pronunciation, checking everybody could do it properly (at that stage, they could use the information in their copybooks).

2. Challenge: you can do it !

Now the pupils had their copybooks closed and they couldn't help each other anymore.

I had papers with the numbers of the groups written on them, I picked up one paper to decide who was going to start the activity. I chose somebody in that group to pronounce the first word of the list.

The next one pronounced the second one etc ... They needed to pronounce all the words correctly to win. When somebody made a mistake, I chose another group to try the challenge.

Nobody actually managed to do the entire list without making any mistakes...

3. Training again

I gave them 2 minutes again to check with their copybooks and classmates after having emphasized the most common mistakes to avoid.

4. Challenge : second chance

We did it again and again, nobody managed to do the whole list properly....

After that, I decided to ask them to train again at home and that we would do it at the beginning of the session the day after.

We came back to tongue twisters and they practised pronouncing them as I decided to include them in the pronunciation challenge the day after.

Then, they had to work on 'phonological flowers' trying to find as many words as they could for each of the four sounds studied (Think Pair Share technique again).

They also started to invent some new tongue twisters using these words.

► CONCLUSION

- I have done this activity before and after 2 chances, there is normally a group to win the challenge. This time, I noticed that the kids really got stuck on 'scared' where there is a double difficulty (to pronounce the 'a' correctly but also the 'ed' which wasn't part of my objectives). I thought of suppressing it from the list but then, if it's the most difficult one to pronounce it's good that the kids practise it a lot so I chose to keep it.
- The pupils really like the activity I presented above and we often do it in class. I use it a lot to revise a list of vocabulary words: for that I do it in 2 steps, first they must just pronounce the words and secondly they must also say their meaning in French. I have noticed it really helps them learning the words and it really develops cooperation in the groups.
- Another pronunciation activity that can be done with the words from the poem is Stepping Stones : words are written on 'stones' and the kids must cross the water (going from one side of the paper to the other side) just stepping on stones with words pronounced [ei] for example.

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Points forts :

- On entend le plaisir que certains élèves ont à 'dire' les mots.
- Dans la mesure où ils doivent s'entraider à bien prononcer cela les encourage à expliciter, expliquer et modéliser

Perspectives pédagogiques possibles :

- Démarche à systématiser lors des phases de mémorisation du nouveau lexique.
- Systématiser également l'enregistrement car cela donne un point de repère aux élèves sur leurs progrès