Short Tongue Twisters

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1. Student ability: High Beginner - Intermediate
2. Approximate length of lesson: 20+
3. Number of students necessary: 2+
4. Preferred age/maturity: JHS, HS, College, Adult
5. Type of lesson: Pair Work Activity

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Language Target: Using ten short tongue twisters to practice rhythm, rhyme and pronunciation.

Setting Up: Ask students if they know any tongue twisters in their own language. The class will usually become very animated and everyone will want to show their skill.

Say a few famous English tongue twisters such as:

She sells sea shells down by the sea shore.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers...

Try to get a few students (or the whole class) to say it three times as naturally as possible. Try it slowly at first and build up a little speed. (If students have trouble, write it on the board.)

Getting Started: Pair the students and give one Worksheet A and the other Worksheet B. Hand out the worksheet, one per student. Student B asks Student A What’s Number 1?

Student A reads the first tongue twister on Worksheet A: Good blood, bad blood, Student A should read it three times as quickly (but accurately) as possible. Student B writes this tongue twister on the appropriate lines on Worksheet B then says it three times as quickly and accurately as possible.

Follow this procedure for all ten tongue twisters printed on the worksheets.

Each tongue twister should be read by both Student A and B three times as either as quickly and accurately as possible.

Variation 1: Have pairs compete against other pairs by saying the tongue twisters in unison. The pair that finishes first is the winner.

Variation 2: Challenge the students to read the tongue twisters forwards then backwards smoothly.

Variation 3: To really enliven a class, separate student pairs as far away from each other as possible within the classroom. When they say their Tongue Twisters to their partners, they’ll have to shout loudly to their partners in order to be heard!

Variation 4: Invite students to say some Tongue Twisters in their own language (and to translate them into English!).
Building Fluency: Ask students if they can explain, in English, the meaning of the tongue twisters.

For higher level ability students, ask them to paraphrase the tongue twisters without using any of the original adjectives, verbs and nouns. (This is very difficult!)

Writing Practice 1: Encourage students to create their own tongue twisters. Even though the meaning is often silly, the sentence(s) must be accurate and there has to be some meaning. Students then swap and recite their tongue twisters with other students.

Writing Practice 2: Rather than handing out the worksheets at first, use this opportunity as a dictation (and spelling?) exercise. Afterward, follow the steps given above.

Contributed by Kurt Scheibner

Similar Lesson:
Long Tongue Twisters
(Lesson Collection Set #5 – Lesson 16b)

Additional Resources: There are a number of really good web sites featuring hundreds of well known and/or unknown tongue twisters. The first one in the following list has over 2500 tongue twisters (and their meanings!) in 105 languages:

1st International Collection of Tongue Twisters
(www.uebersetzung.at/twister/en.htm)

The Tongue Twister Database
(www.geocities.com/Athens/8136/tongue_twisters.html)

The EFL Playhouse Tongue Twister Database
(www.esl4kids.net/tongue.html)