

ALL Language World Conference 2014
Teaching French Phonics in Primary School
An overview of the presentation
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- ❖ **Teaching the sound of a word together with its meaning is very demanding** for learners new to learning a language. This is how new vocabulary is often presented through the 'presentation, practice, production' method of teaching languages. The following is an **alternative and effective way of teaching which puts phonics at its heart**. This is a **7 step process** which could be used for the teaching of many languages.
- ❖ Working with a former colleague, **we identified 26 sounds in the French language** which do not exist in English or are represented by different letters. We asked the children whom we taught to suggest ideas for an action to represent the sound. Through consensus we allotted an action and corresponding image to each sound. Our inspiration came from the 'Jolly Phonics' method of teaching English phonics. This has proved to be a very **effective visual and kinaesthetic way of recalling the sounds and letters**.



oi



ou



eu

Examples:

- ❖ Through the teaching of the following **colours, numbers, days of the week, months and 3 animals**, all the 26 sounds will be encountered. These are vocabulary items which are often taught early on in language learning and would be easy to incorporate into any scheme of work.

bleu/rouge/vert/gris/jaune/orange/violet/marron

zéro/un/deux/trois/quatre/cinq

janvier/février/mars/avril/mai/juin/juillet/août/septembre/octobre/novembre/décembre

lundi/mardi/mercredi/jeudi/vendredi/samedi/dimanche

un chien/une araignée/une panthère

- ❖ It might seem obvious but learners need to be told explicitly that **'letters in other languages can make different sounds'**. Phonics is a code, we need to show them how to break the code. To create independent learners, I believe that the following knowledge and skills are essential – knowledge about how language fits together; dictionary skills and letter/sound connections.

The 7 step process (see the other handout)

- ❖ **Step 1 individual sounds** – identify the sounds in the vocabulary to be taught. Practise the sounds with the accompanying action and visual image

Activities

- Mouth the sound and the children try to be first to do the action then vice versa.
- Say a series of 3 sounds, ask the children to 'record' the sounds in their head and then play back the sounds by saying them once you remove your finger from the invisible 'pause button'.
- Distribute cards with the sound images to groups of children and see which group is first to show the correct card when you say a sound
- Play 'Splat!' with the sound images

- ❖ **Step 2 blend the sounds** – present the sound images in the order found in the word, use letters for sounds which are the same in both languages.

Example:



Activities

- Encourage the children to blend the sounds and say the word before you do. This is much more powerful than following your model and means the learners identify each sound in the word.

- ❖ **Step 3 recognition of the spoken word** – now practise the meaning of the word associated with the sound with activities which you would normally use at the 'practice' stage.

Additional Activities

- Mouth the sounds and perform the actions in the sequence in which they occur in the word and invite the children to guess the word.
- Distribute picture cards for the words, say a sound and ask the children to raise a card if they think that word contains the sound.

- ❖ **Step 4 letters for the sounds** – introduce the graphemes (letters) for the sounds in the words you are teaching. Look at the similarities and differences between English and the foreign language.

Activities

- Say a sound and the children write on mini w/boards the letter. The physical process of frequently writing the word seems to aid learning.
- Splat the grapheme!
- Play phonic bingo with the letter strings
- Play phonic blockbuster
- Sing a sequence of graphemes to a well-known tune performing the action at the same time
- Say a sequence of sounds and the children put the letter cards in the correct sequence
- Distribute the letter cards, say the sound and the child holding the card must raise it immediately or hand to another child

- ❖ **Step 5 spell the word** – ask the children to predict the spelling of the new words based on their new understanding of the letter and sound connections. Once again this is much more powerful than just showing the spelling. It gives them ownership of the word and a clearer understanding of how it is spelt. The revealing of the spelling will introduce, in the case of French, the feature of silent letters. This knowledge will be added to their understanding of how to decode unfamiliar French words.

Activities

- Play phonic hangman – a short line for a one letter sound and a long line for a two/three letter sound.
- Cut up the words into phonemes, distribute the cards in a group and each child takes turns to put down a card –either the first sound of a word or the next sound after a card which has already been placed.

- ❖ **Step 6 recognition of the written word** – use activities to practise the 'production' stage of the PPP process.

- ❖ **Step 7 put words together** – put words together so as to practise, in the case of French, liaison. Counting nouns is a good way to initially practise this. Use nouns beginning with a consonant as well as a vowel.
- Activities**
 - Play guess how many pencils etc. behind my back
 - Play the ‘onze’ game – the children sit down if they have to say ‘onze’ or make an error in liaison
- ❖ Each time new words are taught, the same process can be followed but it will be quicker as there will be fewer new sounds each time. Once all the sounds have been encountered, the actions will be firmly embedded and can be used to reinforce slips in pronunciation. This may seem a slow process initially but it will pay dividends for future language learning. The point will arrive at which learners will approach **unfamiliar words** and **pronounce them with a high level of confidence and success** as well as predict spellings more accurately. Start in Year 3 and many will achieve this by the end of Year 6.
- ❖ **Display** the images and corresponding letters in the classroom or on learning mats for reference. Produce a display of the silent letters and liaison rules.
- ❖ Attainment targets from **the new programme of study** which require the teaching of pronunciation:
 - Link the **spelling, sound and meaning** of words
 - Develop **accurate pronunciation** and intonation so that others can understand when **reading aloud**
 - Present ideas and information **orally** to a range of audiences
 - Describe people, places, things and actions **orally** and in writing
- ❖ As long as you are **consistent** in the actions and images you choose to represent letters in the language which you are teaching, it does not matter what you use.
- ❖ This method of teaching phonics was awarded the ‘**European Language Label Award**’ in 2012

Please contact me if you would like to know more about the above:

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