

Tone Colors

Prep Time: 10-20 min

Aim: To help students focus on tones in a way that involves vision and movement
Level: Elementary
Time: 5-10 minutes
Materials: Cards of five colors for each student (or anything of five colors, e.g. markers, blocks)
Arrangement: Ideally very small groups of students with a teacher/tutor for each

Description

An activity that gives students a chance to focus on tone recognition and production with the additional elements of colors and movements.

In Class

- 1 Students sit in small groups with a teacher/tutor for each group.
- 2 Each student is given a set of five colored cards.
- 3 The teacher/tutor explains that each color represents a different tone, for example: blue is first tone, yellow is second tone, green is third tone, red is fourth tone and black is the neutral tone.
- 4 The tutor reads a word from a pre-designed list (or simply chooses a word), starting with single syllable words. Students raise the appropriate color that corresponds to the tone of the word.
- 5 When students seem to have single syllables down, they each take a few turns saying words with the tutor and classmates raising the tone color they think they heard.
- 6 Assuming the single syllable stage is handled well by the students, the tutor then moves on to two-syllable words. Students raise the appropriate tone colors. They can hold up a single tone color if they believe the two syllables have the same tone.
- 7 Finally students take turns saying two-syllable words. Tutors and classmates respond, and help the student correct his tones if necessary.

Variations

- ✓ Students could hold up fingers instead of colors.
- ✓ Students could create gestures to indicate each tone. It could be good to let students take command of creating the gestures.
- ✓ If the teacher wishes to add an element of competition, it can be made into a race. One set of five cards could be placed in front of three or four students. The first to successfully place a coin on the correct color(s) gets a point.

Notes

I have mixed feelings about this activity, but some students seem to find it quite helpful. Since it realistically only works with single and double-syllables, it seems to have limited use in helping students gain sentence level accuracy. Nevertheless, in the initial weeks it could be useful, particularly for students who like visuals and/or movement.