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PILGRIMS LANGUAGE COURSES

ACTION MAZES CREATED BY STUDENTS

1. What is an action maze?

An action maze is a set of reading cards. On card one the reader is assigned a role and is introduced to a problem situation. The card also proposes two, three or four possible courses of action. When the reader has decided on a course of action s/he turns to the appropriate card in the set. This card shows the outcome of the decision taken and proposes further courses of action appropriate to the new situation. The reader again has to choose. And so on until the reader comes to an end card and is out of the maze.

Originally used for business training, action mazes are ideal for provoking fast, intelligent gist-reading by second language learners. The learner is forced to read and immediately process the information thus received in an active way.

2. How is an action maze planned and written?

From the writing point of view, an action maze is a branching tree program with a great deal of looping back and leaping from branch to branch. When you create a maze your first job is to establish the complete tree that is to grow out of the initial problem situation.

3. How to get students generating their own mazes.

Initially students are invited to work through a couple of action mazes the teacher presents to them. From this reading and choosing work the teacher then leads them on to establish the tree patterns behind the sets of cards.

The students are asked to brain storm a whole range of initial situations that could be head cards for their own mazes. The students then split up into groups of three and get down to writing the tree diagram for one head card of their choice. The most committed student in each three is asked to go away and for homework turn the tree diagram into a set of properly written-up cards.

In this way students generate reading material for each other and naturally within their own special interest area, if they are a specialised group.

Why should we language teachers write materials for people who are much better equipped, content-wise, to write their own? Our job is reduced to the proper one of help and correction.

4. The Workshop.

The workshop session would aim to experientially introduce participants to action mazes, to get them tree-writing and to discuss the problems they see as possibly arising in their own particular teaching situations.

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