Tone Mazes

Aim: To focus on tones in characters
Level: Any level after learning about 100 characters (depending on the characters used in the maze)
Time: 10-20 minutes, or as homework
Materials: A copy of the maze for each student
**Arrangement:** Individually or in pairs

Description
An interesting way to help students focus on the tones of some high frequency words.

In Class
1   Hand out a copy of the maze to each student.

2   Students need to find a path through the maze where every word contains the same tone. For example, if the starting word is 很忙 that means the students will have to find words that all have the 3rd tone 很 or all have the second tone 忙. If 很忙 was touching two words, 他 and 老李, the only correct choice would be 他 because it has neither a 2nd or 3rd tone.

3   When the student(s) think they have found the correct path through the maze, have them compare with another student/ group. If there is some disagreement, you can help provide the correct answer.

Variations
✓   This could easily be done as homework. Spend a few minutes in class introducing how the maze works, then students do it on their own outside of class.
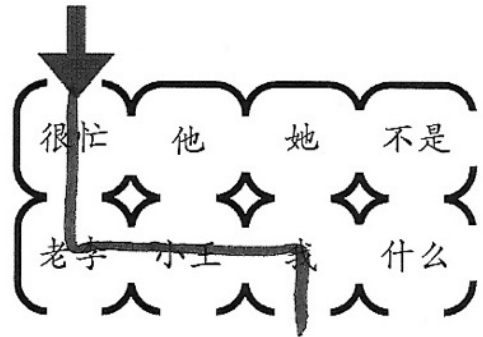
Notes
There are some sticky problems that can come up in this kind of activity, such as tone variations between Mainland and Taiwan pronunciations, or conversation and reading aloud, particularly in regards to the neutral tone (e.g. **xiānshēng** or **xiānsheng**). In the sample maze I have done my best to avoid situations where such differences are important. For example, in the first maze, while 先生 occurs, whether 生 is neutral tone or not, the maze will work just fine. On the other hand, the tone maze might provide a good opportunity to force students to address such issues. If your students are ready for it, you could design a maze that focusses on neutral tones, asking students to find a path through the maze according to neutral tones, or finding the path where words could have multiple pronunciations– these might be challenging mazes even for native speakers.

While I have used characters in the sample maze here, it would be possible to use Pinyin. In such a case, probably the maze would be designed using Pinyin *without* tone marks. While this might be confusing for an advanced student (or teacher!) who knows many words that have the same Pinyin spelling except for tones, beginning students are not likely to have such a problem. Such a maze would have to be designed carefully using only words the students already knew. On the other hand, there are ways of designing mazes that usefully make use of Pinyin with tones, as shown in the Pronunciation Mazes that follow on the next pages.

This maze and those that follow are my own creations, but the idea of using a maze to target pronunciation is not mine. I borrowed it from the book, *Pronunciation Games*, by Mark Hancock which targets aspects of English pronunciation through the use of various types of games, including mazes.

designed by Eric Pelzl

TONE MAZE

Find a path through the maze from top to bottom. You can only move horizontally or vertically, not diagonally. You must choose a tone to start with (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th) then try to find a path through the maze where every word contains that tone. There are two possible paths, in other words, only two of the four tones will work.

1 很忙	2 他	3 她	4 不是	5 没有	6 一个	7 不是
8 老李	9 小王	10 我	11 什么	12 谁	13 太	14 星期
15 太太	16 先生	17 你	18 哪个	19 这个	20 那个	21 很多
22 八	23 七	24 六	25 五	26 四	27 三	28 二
29 英国	30 中国	31 美国	32 喜欢	33 吃饭	34 中文	35 英文
36 爸爸	37 女儿	38 姐姐	39 妹妹	40 弟弟	41 哥哥	42 妈妈
43 老师	44 小学	45 中学	46 大学	47 学生	48 今天	49 昨天
50 可是	51 常常	52 很少	53 做	54 叫	55 工作	56 明天