Level: A1 upwards

Focus: Pronunciation - final devoicing: hard/heart

Activity: minimal pair discrimination

LISTENING MAZE

_____

In many languages, voiced consonants such as /d/ at the end of a word become devoiced, such as /t/. In this way, a speaker who intended to say 'road' may be understood as saying 'wrote'. This activity is to raise learners' awareness of this.
Notice that the vowel sound is longer before the /d/ than before the /t/. This difference in vowel length may be more useful in helping the listener to distinguish 'road' from 'wrote' than the actual consonant quality.

PROCEDURE

1. Give out the Listening Maze board. Explain that they will hear a list of words, and they must find the words in the maze and follow the list from 'Start' to 'Finish'. They may move horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

2. Now say a list of words which form a connected route from Start to Finish, or use the downloadable audios on the web page. For example, audio 1 provided gives the following route: start - hard - wrote - wide - road - coat - ride - write - white - sat - plate - lent - played - said - finish

3. Now ask the students to work in pairs or small groups. One of them gives a route through the maze. The other(s) listen and follow the route in the maze. Note that the responsibility for finding the correct route belongs to both the speaker and listeners. The speaker must try to distinguish the words clearly, the listeners must try to listen carefully.

start →	hard	road	right	sad
heart	wrote	white	sat	plate
road	wide	write	played	lent
code	coat	ride	said	lend
hurt	heard	set	lent →	finish