

## Jigsaw Games

Everybody knows what a jigsaw puzzle is. Its basic idea – fitting lots of small pieces together to form a picture – can be used in a modified form as the underlying principle for quite a lot of games and activities in foreign language learning. One important difference between a jigsaw puzzle and a language learning jigsaw game should be noted. With a conventional jigsaw puzzle all the pieces are spread out in a single mass for all to see before being selected by a player or a group of players, who rearrange them in the shape of the original picture. In our language learning jigsaw game the “parts” are distributed amongst a number of players very much like in a game of cards. The final product to be achieved by arranging the parts may be a text as well as a picture. As a rule nobody is allowed to show his/her jigsaw parts to anybody else, and therefore the players are forced to describe their parts to each other before they can begin to put them together. The combining process itself equally gives ample opportunity for discussion and speculation. Since each of the players holds a vital piece of the puzzle, everybody feels responsible for the outcome and remains interested and active throughout the game. Because of the high instance of relatively unstructured communication in jigsaw games, they are suitable mainly for intermediate and advanced learners.

### *Jigsaw Story*

#### Material

1. A story or non-fiction prose text not known to the players, with as many sentences as there are players. Each sentence of the text has to be typed onto a separate piece of paper. In large groups (more than 16 to 20 people) two texts should be used with separate teams.
2. A copy of the text for the teacher.
3. A cassette or tape recorder for the final recording of the text (optional).

#### Language

The language level partly depends on the text(s) used. But since the players themselves have to organize the restoration of their text(s), a basic knowledge of interactive language is necessary. This game may be used to practise the recognition of text markers for structure and cohesion if a suitable text is chosen.

#### Procedure

*Step 1:* Each player receives one sentence of the text and is asked to memorize it. After three minutes for the learning of the sentences all slips of paper are handed back to the teacher.

*Step 2:* The teacher then explains the task: “The sentences you have learnt by heart have all been taken from the same text (story). Try and work out the complete text (story) together. You are not allowed to write anything down. When you think that you have found the correct sequence of all the sentences, make a recording of it (alternative: recite the story/text to me).” From this point onwards the teacher should remain absolutely silent and not help or interfere with the players’ actions unless they constitute a break of the rules, e.g. writing the sentences down.

*Step 3:* When the players have recorded (recited) their final version of the text, the teacher reads out the original. Differences, difficulties and feelings about the game may then be discussed.

#### Remarks

This game is not only an effective stimulus for communication but also a powerful exercise in group dynamics. Some groups try and organize the puzzle period on democratic lines, others flounder until a leader emerges who takes things in hand. The teacher can learn quite a lot about his/her pupils during the activity, both about their achievement in the foreign language and the relations within the group.

#### Variations

It is more difficult to reconstruct a dialogue or conversation in this way if the speakers’ names are omitted.

(To be continued.)