

Dear Soon-going-home People,

How good are you at transitions? Though I get plenty of practice I am a real slow learner in this area. Let's take a simple example of a transition: the journey to and from work.

Are you better at going to work in the morning or at coming home at night. Which of the two processes do you manage most smoothly and effectively?

In a real sense you start this course on your return to your own country. It is there that you will reap any language benefit from the past two weeks ( I am thinking of the 15- how much have we damaged your English, G , with our odd European version of your mother tongue?

The methodological content of the course certainly starts when you get back into your own classroom. Sometimes, after an effective course, students who already know you, claim they see and feel differences in you.

Will the light brush with Gattegno's Silent Way thinking, the line up activity on your loudness or quietness, watching people work without words, will this modify something in the way the more talkative people deal with their classes?

Will you find yourself inventing new doubling and role-reversal exercises to suit the age group and feelings of the people you teach? How far has the idea of stimulating the inter-personal intelligence in this way begun to become part of you?

Will S get over her shock at the idea of mixed language story-telling and use it with kids in Greenland. Knowing you, S , at least a bit, I guess that if you do get over your initial surprise reaction you may well ending up telling three layer stories in Greenlandic, Danish and English!

D , will you ease the load of your seven groups and 28 hours teaching by getting a couple of the groups to play Language Reversi for half an hour each week. This would reduce your teaching load to 27 hours at a stroke while possibly enriching student vocab very fast.

Will some folk pick up on Sheelagh Deller's idea of getting upper level students prepare teaching materials for lower level ones? A good exercise to do this with is the clown/clone - audience/ congregation exercise.

I wonder what success you have with using those Teacher-less Tasks we did on the first Monday? ( You remember ... about the philosopher in the IMMENSE(S ) desert ( G ) )

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The above are important practical questions but there are maybe more valuable questions to be ask about how the course you start next week will be.

Some that occur to me tonight are:

- how do you create your "good" student  
how do you invent your "bad" student?
- How do you stop thinking about "them" when you think about a class?
- How do you help new thoughts you have had stand up agst routine and habit?
- How do you question your own beliefs? E , are you tempted to think about Gardner's intra-personal intelligence, which G had in plenty, and question your beliefs about social learning in the language classroom?

Who cares about my questions- the relevant ones are the ones that spring from inside.

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A bit of group theory may be in order at this stage in the course.

Our group was quite classical in the way we started in a sort of getting-to-know each other positivity, a sort of honeymoon. This maybe took up most of the week one.

This then led, via a number of small "storms", to the group storm on the afternoon of the physical thunderstorm outside. At this point, I feel, we sort of ground to a halt- the tensions in the group were too strong for us to go on the same way.

After this storm I felt we went into a different sort of way of being together.... Somehow a more realistic way of relating to each other, less careful, less censorship of full feelings. People could be more honest and more their own unvarnished selves.

We had worked out a new mode of working.

In the jargon of psychology this process is known as **FORMING**  
**STORMING**  
**NORMING**

I have certainly experienced groups going thru more openly violent storms than ours, often apparently focused on the stuff that a particular participants brought to the course.

( In all the above I am generalising about " the group" and there will have been people who did not feel the need to storm and who, for themselves, felt light and happy throughout. )

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When you work with students it is good to bear in mind that there will always be three areas of work in a group:

1. the official task ( in our case, learning more about creative ML teaching )
2. the here and now of the group- the stuff going on between people in the group
3. the stuff from their past that each participant brings

This does not just apply to a group like ours, working on things linguistic and psychological. It applies just as much to a group of engineers building the next bridge over the Bosphorous. If areas 2 and 3 are not dealt with, they will intrude on area 1 and detrimentally.

You must know all the above, instinctively, from your own teaching.

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Too much rambling,

Good night,

  
Mario.