

33 K [redacted] Way  
Cambridge

Dear Everybody,

You may remember the Sunday morning in mid-January when I showed you letters I had received from language students. That same morning, just before lunch, I asked you to write letters to your right-hand neighbour and your left hand neighbour, alternately playing the role of the 'preside' and a teacher. During that exercise I walked round behind people reading and helping to improve the English. Over the years I have got used to the generally very high standard of oral English at Via Piave meetings. As I read over people's shoulders I realised that what I was reading was the intermediate level of written English accepted by the dismal Italian university system, the level of the 'laurea', not the level that you have forged for yourself in the Association over the years in oral production.

So with many people there is a big gap between the excellence of their oral command of the language and the intermediateness of their written production.

It is against the backdrop of this technical realisation that I am writing to you now, 'you' being all the people who put their names on the address list I passed around that Sunday. My proposal is that we start a correspondence the technical aim of which would be to improve your written English. From my point of view this letter writing could maybe provide me with a continuing window on the work of a group of colleagues whom I have gradually come to know better over the past 6/7 years.

I have just come back from Italy, the last seminar I gave having been in Lecce. The sky here above me is sodden grey and this morning I have to talk to Cambridge University Press about their proposal that they lift Grammar Games out of the Pilgrims pilot list and publish it properly. I just wonder what sort of goofy editorial proposals/edicts they will come up with. I also have to decide by when I can promise to have the modified manuscript ready for them. June? The problem is that I want to expand the book a long way beyond its present Pilgrims format and this will mean a lot of test teaching at the Davies School, here in Cambridge. I have about 5 weeks seminar-ing to do between now and June (Denmark, France, Greece, Germany) but I am committed to producing a book on the use of questionnaires for Pilgrims by April. I have a feeling of hecticness this morning as the CUP interview forces me to plan the next few months. This is added to by the fact that there are about 30 letters to deal with that have piled up on my desk while away in Italy. Some routine, some requiring thought - a day and a half of office work. In a way I like it, in a way I don't.

A very good book that I ordered months ago has just arrived: The Shattered Mind by Howard Gardner, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1977.

This is an account of the mental disorders occurring in post stroke patients, and about half the book is about the language results of strokes. Very, very interesting. I have a feeling that real knowledge about language learning processes will come to us from the neurophysiologists and not from the linguists. I could be wrong.

Yours warmly,

Mario

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