

Friday April 9th, Good Friday, (in Christian thinking)

Dear Going-home Folk,

I wonder how important it is to you to see the people we talk to in their own setting, as opposed to seeing them here in the centre. I guess some of us are more environment-sensitive than others. I also wonder what it is like for our speakers.....do some of them maybe feel more at home in their own setting, perhaps more confident?

I was very moved by the reports we heard yesterday afternoon from each other, after the visit to the Old People's Day Centre. One thing that struck me was the resilience and relative optimism of some of the people reported on. I was also made more aware of how the deep past can feel like yesterday for a person in their eighties, of how one's understanding of one's personal history changes and modifies as the years pass.

A thing I am not sure I understand is the relationship between the way we experience our personal history and the way we make sense of the documented history we read. I vividly remember buying a newspaper with the news of Kennedy's death in it at 10.25 pm on Panepistimiou Street, in Athens, Greece. This memory has a very different quality to my memory of what happened to the President in his motorcade over there in the States, the historical reality that we somehow all share.

I wonder how this week we have spent together will look and feel to you, say, in two months time. What use will you make of the information and the experiences? How and where will it, or will it not, feed into your teaching? How has the week been as a language experience? Here, I guess, very different for different people. Have you noticed anything new about yourself as a learner? (I am fascinated by observing M [redacted] and to a lesser extent A [redacted], in listening comprehension situations- sometimes M [redacted] seems to understand with total accuracy and correctness while at others he seems to seriously miss the point. For example, when we were talking about battered women's refuges, safe houses, M [redacted] asked if the United Nations could help- he had heard 'refuge' as 'refugee' I am still not sure I know what he will find difficult and what he will find easy.)

All this makes me think that 'level', in talking about language learners, is a pretty wobbly concept.

I hope you have a good trip home.

Mario 

ps: and I wonder how the 4 days have been for Sa [redacted], who will be teaching a culture of UK course in July?