

MR/JG/46

6 September, 1988

Ms J [REDACTED] B [REDACTED] A [REDACTED]
Cite El Habib
Bloc [REDACTED]
Ezzahra
TUNISIA

Dear J [REDACTED],

You stay in my mind six days after the end of the course, so I thought it good to write to you.

For me there were strong moments like reading your book, imagining the proviseur's office during your first Wednesday lecture in the course of which you described the inspection situation, moments in Greek when you were clearly enjoying learning a new language and difficult moments like our lunch together on the second Wednesday. There were warm moments like when you and M [REDACTED] were around when Inas told me a little about her work in Cairo on the second Thursday evening.

I am partly aware that my way of thinking and of working with a group is hard to cope with for some one who works best within clearly defined frames and along relatively predictable lines. I have not yet discovered how to sort out this animation problem in my own work. Germany is a place where this aspect of my work can be very off-putting to some folk.

Let me explain what I mean with an example: on the second Friday morning Tessa was working with us on categories of exercises and asked me to exemplify such a 'family'. My response was to ask you all to do a Puchta exercise in which you first raised your arms with eyes shut and then imagined raising your arms without actually doing so physically. I then briefly spoke about other exercises which I thought were related to this one.

To have reached you efficiently it might have been better to describe the major role that visualisation currently plays in sports training and then to have gone on to outline the sorts of exercises that can be usefully done in language training in the areas of teaching spelling and pronunciation. These exercises share with sports training the mental representation of an act without actually doing it. Let me give you an example:

The class first chants this text to get the feel of stress-timing:

Solomon (Grundy)
Born (on Monday)
Christened (on Tuesday)
Engaged (on Wednesday)
etc.....

They then chant the parts outside the brackets and leave the right space for the words in the brackets. The teacher asks them to mentally 'say' the second part of each line but not to say it out loud. The exercise on stress-timing is successfully completed when the students are able to say the first line out loud, to say the next five in their heads and to say the last line out loud in perfect unison.

The rationale for this family of exercises in sports training, physiotherapy, singing and language teaching is that you get better results by chunking the task into two parts:

- (i) the mental representation of the task
- (ii) its physical execution

Instead of explaining this background to you in a rational way, I asked you to stand up and flap your arms. I do have some awareness of how intensely wrong this is for your way of learning things!

Maybe you could help me by letting me have a clear idea of your own learning model at which I am merely guessing above. I would like to work better with other people with similar learning styles over the next ten years.

Yours warmly,

Mario.

P.S. For which trainers is/are your current way/s of presenting pedagogical ideas wrong?