

# THREE EARTH TREMORS IN MY TEACHING

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to sum up, (briefly) the previous class, reminding the others of the grammar done and the exercises covered. I am careful to make sure they show respect to the rest of the class.

My real problem is with the students who don't want to do anything at all and who also tend to have behaviour problems.

My first tactic is to try to ignore their bad behaviour and treat them with all the patience, respect and love I can muster, so they realise that I do not hold anything against them. I tend to get on pretty well with the trouble-makers.

My second tactic with these kids is to try and get them to understand that they can learn if they want to. Whenever I make a mistake myself I typically say:

"You see, I make mistakes too, so don't panic. The main thing is to realise that you can do better next time and then just do it!"

My third tactic with the troublemakers, if they don't change their attitude, is to talk to them informally at breaktime and to ask them three questions:

"Why are you studying?"

"Why do you dislike English?"

"What do you want to do in the future?"

I try to make a deal with them. I give them extra exercises, explanations and tutorials at breaktime to help them with their difficulties and so to obtain "our pass."

Some of them, not as many as I would like, actually change attitude and get through the course with a passmark.

A third group of students has influenced Eugenia to treat them differently from the high-fliers and from the trouble-makers. They are the shy ones (perhaps some of them are girls?) about them she has this to say:

In dealing with the shy but hard-working students I do what I can to raise their self-esteem. I ask them about things I know they have done well. I check their exercises regularly and write encouraging margin notes. I offer them the leader role in pairwork. Sometimes I ask them to read aloud to the class or to write on the board. If they try to get out of doing this, I don't allow them to. I tell them to imagine they are reading or writing to their best friend. At other times I tell them to think of the task as a sort of rehearsal for tough situations in later life.

Caleb Gattegno, father of Silent Way, suggests that TEACHING BE SUBORDINATED TO LEARNING, and Eugenia's way of dealing with a partially refractory class of middle teenagers seems to be a superb illustration of Gattegno's dictum. At behaviour level she works with each student in a way that dovetails with their mood and need, while this work is under-pinned, at belief level, by powerful attitudes that centrally include respect, patience and love. Eugenia is a marvellous example of a teacher who will probably continue to develop professionally since her ever-changing students will continue to make new demands on her and demand new solutions from her.

No time for routinisation, boredom or burn-out, three curses of teaching.

I believe my development as a professional has been centrally influenced by the changing waves of students I have worked with over 35 years on the job. While Eugenia seems to be a natural “knower” of her students, able to willingly embrace them in their diversity, my case is different. I am very much what NLP describes as a “self-referenced” person, that is to say that I look inside myself when I have to make decisions, rather than going outside for advice and input. I teach from my inner convictions at the time and this can make me insensitive to signals from the students. My learning from my students tends to come violently, as if the earth were moving under my feet.

Let me share three moving-earth experiences that have been a powerful part of my on-going personal and professional experiences.

#### “Earth-tremor” 1

In July 1968 I was teaching a group of first year university students from Tokyo who had come for an intensive summer programme in Cambridge, UK. Our coursebook was Geoffroy Boughton’s **Success with English**, Bk 2 and I had just discovered it and worshipped it. I thought it was clear, systematic and interesting and I drove those girls relentless through 24 of the 30 units. I knew for sure that I was doing a superb job- I was 28 years old.

In the feedback at the end of the course several of my students said something like this:

*Very good course. Very good teacher. We thank you very much.  
Same course possible in Tokyo. It was not necessary to come to UK.*

I went home shattered that Friday evening- the earth had moved under my feet.

Their feedback was so measured, so courteous, so damning and so incontrovertibly correct. This feedback led me to my first questioning of the coursebook as the royal road to learning English, as the one orderly and safe way of teaching English. My weaning from the coursebook was still some way ahead in my development but the first chords of doubt had sounded in my ears.

#### Earth-tremor 2

In the mid 70’s of the last century I began working in a school that had a lot of technically-minded students from Iran. They typically did badly in the entry tests based on grammar, reading and writing that we gave them and they landed up in classes where the aural and oral work was too easy for them. They screamed to be moved up. The teachers wanted to keep them where they were. Many teachers ended up classifying the Iranians as unreasonable and hard to teach.

I found that these Iranian students did not thrive on the diet of drama, sketches and stories which I initially offered them. Then I began to get them doing exercises of a much more logical-mathematical sort and these, to my surprise, they lapped up. I began to have a first inkling of the way of thinking which Howard Gardner was to expound fully in *Frames of Mind*, 1986, that different learners have different intelligences, and learn language best through the exercises that draw on their strongest intelligences.

These students, via their reactions, taught me to change the thinking areas through which I taught English and I have to thank the Iranians and their mindset for spurring me on to write my part of *Challenge to Think*, that came out with OUP some years later. The switched perspective that went into that book was a major step forward in my CPD.

### Earth-tremor 3

In the early 90's I worked in a school with large numbers of Japanese 18 and 19 year olds. I had taught Japanese people before but not in large numbers. Over a two year period I came to realise how vitally important the written channel can be in making contact with these passionate, eager people who at first stay discretely behind their many layered masks.

I simply began writing letters to my students and asking them to write letters to each other across the class. This seemed to suit their need to take time over self-expression in English. The written mode allowed them this time. Soon a whole set of letter writing exercises developed which included these activities:

- each student chooses an animal or object to role-play. The students then write letters from themselves, as themselves, to their classmates in role. So Mitsuko writes a letter to Tomoko in role as a butterfly. The butterfly (Tomoko) replies to Mitsuko..etc...
- Students work in pairs. Person A writes a letter on Person B's behalf to another person in the group. Simultaneously Person B writes a letter to another person in the group on Student A's behalf.
- Each student writes a letter to herself in three weeks time. If her name is Chieko, she writes *Dear Chieko* and signs off *with love from Chieko*. The letters are put in envelopes and collected by a "post person" from the group Who brings them back and gives them out three weeks later.

These techniques then came together with those devised by three other colleagues and became the OUP title *Letters*, Burbidge et al. ( 1996).

This "earth-tremor" was less violent than the earlier two, it was more like a series of gently rippling earth wiggles. Yet, yes, I was shocked to see how much my Japanese students would dare to say to me on paper that they could not say orally or say in front of the whole class. Students, once again had fed into a book project that was a major part of my CPD in the early 90's.

Is the realisation that the people we work with all day long are among our major teachers a realisation that unique to teachers? Do other professionals accept that their clients act as their guides and mentors? How does a doctor feel about her patients in this regard, a lawyer about those who pay his fees, or a librarian about book borrowers? I have no secure evidence about this but I have a suspicion that anybody offering a human service will be influenced by the receiver of that service, perhaps even in ways that s/he is not consciously aware of.

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This is certainly not the case with Inger Fong from Sweden who writes in HLT July 2001 about an eighth grade class she had when she was a young teacher. Fong is very consciously aware of the help her students gave her. She reports:

*From the very start I felt uneasy when I came into the classroom. There was animosity in the air, so to speak. One thing worth mentioning is that their former class teacher was still at the same school, but she had chosen to become class teacher of another form because of a much better schedule. (I was not supposed to let the students in on this information)*

*Weeks went by and the situation got worse: noisy boys and cheeky answers from the girls: I felt more like a prison warder than a caring teacher.*

Inger knew that she had to do something to lance this boil, so, after about a month of mounting tension she decided to have a meeting with the students to thrash things out.

*The students looked confused when I said I wanted us to have a talk about the situation in the class. I asked them why they were so negative and why the climate was so bad.*

*Eva, who was one of the cheekiest but also the brightest girl, said:*

*“You’re always so moody!. Nobody can tell what mood you’re in when you come into the room.”*

*I was stunned Another girl, Ann-Britt, joined in and said something similar to what Eva had said . The rest of them were silent but their silence as well as their facial expressions could only be interpreted as consent. One of the boys expressed anger at the disappearance of their former class teacher.*

*So what did I get out of this? First of all I had to analyse myself. Were Eva’s comments justified? Was I the one to blame for the situation? Recalling my feelings before the lessons in this particular class, I realised that I had probably been unable to pretend I enjoyed being there which had been obvious to the students. I didn’t like them, so what did I expect? I was supposed to represent the grown-up world, to be a role model, but had behaved more like a teenager myself.*

*The atmosphere improved a lot after this. It did not become perfect but as good as it possibly could be, in the circumstances. During the following term, the Spring term, I started to really like the students and they too started to like me.*

Inger closes the HLT article with these words:

*Over the past 25 years of teaching I have always thought of this experience as being the kick-off in becoming aware of myself as a teacher.*

*Thank you. Eva, for helping me to tear down the wall I had started to build, without knowing that I was the builder.*

There is strong case to be made out that, over a lifetime's career, the students who most actively promote our development are those who present us with a problem, who effectively jerk us out of our routine-ised sense of well-being in the job. Implicitly they say to us :

“ How come your frame of thought and feeling is so narrow that we/I lie outside of it?”

One of the real risks that a reasonably effective teacher runs is that of dozing off on the job and students she conceives of as problematic often make a vital, if temporarily unwelcome contribution to her CPD.

The French have a proverb that runs: “ What is good is the enemy of what is better.” And there was a saying current in the 1980's in US business circles that went: “ if it's OK then it needs fixing”. To my mind both these sayings capture an essential aspect of CPD.

In my own case, I love teaching and my motivation for teaching is pleasure and satisfaction. These rough, challenging situations are painful and unwelcome because they interfere with my pleasure and satisfaction. However I cannot avoid noticing their long-term usefulness. They end up by enriching the pleasure I get from teaching.

Let us take the situation that Claire Thomas Özel describes in her article GIVE ME MISTAKES ( HLT 3/5 Sept 22001). She had to teach a class of visually impaired children who had been taught for several years by a blind teacher. She writes:

*The children had endured years of inappropriate teaching. When he did not get the correct answers to his questions, their teacher would lose his temper. The children soon learnt not to attempt to answer. They settled down for several semesters of letting waves of English monologue wash over them as the teacher talked to himself. Being blind, he did not pick up on the lack of response. Thus bad habits accumulated over years of negative experience. The deepest damage, however, seems to be the students' fear of failure: it had driven these students to a stony silence.*

*In one class I was confronted with total silence; not one child would offer anything. Even the friendliest of approaches would not thaw the petrified figures in front of me. I stood there like a prune: a teacher with nothing to work on!*

The situation was such a mess that Claire had to break out of her normal routines. The situation and the kids' needs demanded a change of mindset. If we think back to the French proverb, there was no “GOOD” here so she had to break her normal rules and go for “BETTER”. Let Claire continue the story:

*In my frustration, I pleaded with the class:*

*“ Give me MISTAKES !” and added, to confirm my unprecedented request :*

*“ I do not want correct sentences, you do not need help with these.”  
The children wanted to please me, and giving me mistakes was one thing they could do, though, after such a long silence, they were even slow at that.*

*“ Was it safe?”*

*“ Did she really mean it?”*

*“ And why?”*

*“ What would she do with mistakes?”*

*We thus began our slow march forward, wading through stagnant marshes of basic grammar errors, accumulated without understanding over the years. The sentences that we corrected together provided a gradual review in a learner centred context of what they needed, as they needed it.....*

The sheer size and weight of the problem was such that Claire had to try something radically new, something that, in the light of normal teacher thinking, has a paradoxical ring to it. Necessity, in this case, was the mother of saving invention.

I cannot imagine any trainer or any training course contributing to Claire’s CPD as powerfully as this class of traumatised, blind children did, sunk in their stony silence in front of her.

While only a minority of teachers will spend a lot of time in CPD sessions or on training courses, all teachers can receive in-service training from the students in front of them.

This form of in-service training is offered to everybody, whether they like it or not.

Would there be a case for offering a teacher-training salary to trouble-makers like those in the class that Concha Julián reports on in MY DISCIPLINE RECIPE ( HLT Year 2/1 Jan 2000):

*You stand in front of your students begging for silence and trying to get their attention. Everything is useless, you are not reaching them at all. You feel helpless.*

In this situation what Concha one day tried was to role-reverse with one of the leaders of the mob and ask him to teach the class:

*Extroverted or leader students are often eager to play our role because they feel they can attract more attention and become even more popular. We can give this person the class register and the teacher’s book so that s/he can start the class and follow the lesson planned for today. We simply sit in the student’s place and play our new role as a classmate, talking laughing, paying no attention.*

*The new “teacher comes to the front of the class. Nothing happens until one of his/her classmates notices the change and, shouting, attracts the attention of the rest. Suddenly the miracle happens: one by one all the faces turn to the front. When the new “teacher” starts asking for silence in the way we normally do, everybody thinks: “ tisis going to be fun”. The student imitate your voice, pitch, intonation, tone... word and expressions and may dare to imitate your gestures. The whole scene can last from 5 to 15 minutes, more if the student is eager to go on.*

The role reversal strategy that Concha used with this class allowed her to enter into a dialogue with the students about her role as teacher their role as students. She wowed these teenagers into a new level of awareness.

My thesis right through this chapter has been that our students are our main change agents, the main force that leads us to modify our practice for the better.

I firmly believe this, but you may reasonably object that all the teachers whose words you have just read are remarkably open and imaginative practitioners. There are indeed many teachers who coffer-dam their reality off from what their students are implicitly or explicitly telling them and carry forward a standardised routine that they evolved in the first couple of years of their teaching career. Such teachers are impervious to signals their students emit- they see them as a mass to be herded rather than as mentors to be heard.

I really do not know how such colleagues can be reached and there are huge numbers of them round the world among the 4 – 6 million of us who teach English.

Perhaps I have to admit that a real alternative to continuous personal development is **continuous personal stagnation** (CPS) and that many teachers either choose this path or unhappily find that this is the place they have reached. For some people teaching is a mission, an act that fully involves them, while for many it is a chore. A repetitive and tedious way of earning a crust, a bind that cannot be escaped from. Roll-on pension day!

Sad but true.

Bio data

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TEACHING CULTURE AND TEACHING LANGUAGE

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I am pretty sure that I have strong personal reasons for being very interested in matters cultural. I say " pretty sure" because the ideas I want to share with you have only come to the fore in my mind over the last 10-15 years. My father was a North Western Italian ( Piedmont, Turin) while my mother hailed half from Aachen in Germany and half from Liverpool. One area of permanent discord between these two people was negotiation of anger. My father, conforming to his own choleric Italian cultural norms, would flare up in blazing anger over quite small things. My mother would not know what had hit her, would feel extremely upset, and would retire into her sulky shell like a snail. Half an hour later he would want to kiss and make up but she would have none of it. Amazingly, these two repeated this pattern over twenty five years; no cultural learning took place. They both, basing themselves on their own societal norms, found the other's behaviour intolerable. In their view, only the other needed to change their behaviour.

At this point in the talk I asked people to bring up a painful inter-cultural situation that they had experienced. I did not want to be left alone with my own!

I then modelled a positive, cultural learning experience. Once, in Turkey, a male colleague and I went to pick up a thirty five year old female colleague from her flat. I was sitting in the front of the car with Ahmet. As we sat waiting for her to come down, I moved to the back seat. Ahmet turned round and said: " Mario, why have you moved to the back?"

" Well, so that Bahar can sit in the front with you. She is a lady"

Long pause

" Mm , well, she might be a little bit embarrassed."

" How come?"

" In Turkey we tend to feel that the guest should have the best place. We also feel that an older person should have precedence over a younger person."

It didn't take me long to get back into that front seat. Thank you, Ahmet, for teaching me to behave adequately and for doing it with the gentleness and lightness of touch that is so central to Turkish culture.

At this point in the talk I asked people to talk to each other about a good cultural learning experience they have had.

Having , I hope, established the fact that cultural differences run deep and enshrine strong differences in belief systems, and that cultural misunderstandings can seriously affect human relationships I then went on to outline a thinking frame that helps to make sense of the jungle of cultural confusion.

I proposed these four basic attitudes to cultural difference:



**UNIVERSALIST** In this frame of mind you notice the reality of the other culture being different from yours, but you maintain that such differences are superficial and that deeper investigation of the seeming differences will reveal basic sameness.

When I watched my wife giving birth to our daughter in Greece in the 1960's, I heard the other women in the ward screaming "Panagia, then boro!" (Holy Mary, I can't!) while Sophie tried to read a book between contractions, but I was sure that the biology and the feelings of the situation were such that there was 1% difference and 99% sameness. This is a clear example of the UNIVERSALIST state of mind.

#### **EVOLUTIONIST UPWARDS**

Within this mindset you look admiringly at the other culture, sigh and say "If only we could somehow manage to do things as well as they do them." In the area of generosity and hospitality I have this attitude towards people in the Arab World. I have been bowled over by the givingness, unstintingness and inter-personal warmth of my Arab students. I wish my own mixed Latin-English-German culture were less mean and bounded in the area of giving and hospitality. I feel ashamed of Northern European meanness. Arabs are better than us in this area.

#### **EVOLUTIONIST DOWNWARDS**

A good illustration of this attitude comes in the area of eating foreign food.

Italian Student in Edinburgh: "these Scots cook pasta to death- has nobody told them that pasta should be al dente?"

Chinese student: "Breakfast after breakfast and not a grain of rice. Don't they have steamers?"

Japanese student: "Heavy stuff- they never have fish."

It might be fair to say that many teenagers, on their first trip abroad look down on foreign food. "My Mum cooks better".

One of the biggest cultural transitions and adjustments most of us have to make is entering our in-law family. Aren't some of our both initial and later established reactions EVOLUTIONIST DOWNWARDS?

#### **RELATIVIST**

In this frame of mind you are able to behave one way in culture A and differently in culture B in a similar situation, and the change of behaviour costs you nothing. An example: when I am paying for something in Italy I lay down the money on the surface between me and the recipient; when I am in UK, I put the money into the person's hand. I feel equally at ease in both situations. A second example: in Germany I happily pay for my own drinks in a pub, while in UK I am happy to stand the people I with a round of drinks.

The above four positions carry no moral connotations- in anthropological thinking they are merely descriptive of four different attitudinal realities. A pacifist may have an EVOLUTIONIST DOWNWARDS attitude towards people who voluntarily join the SAS commandos. We are not judging either group, we are describing an attitude.

You may experience all four states of mind within half an hour, and we have all experienced each at different times. Nobody is purely one or the other.

If you wish to use this thinking framework, you may want to pause and think of times when you personally have experienced each feelings/ state of mind.

Culture is linked to language, and I find it hard to thinking of learning a language without also wanting to plunge myself into the culture to which it is vehicular. This is very clear if I am learning a Papua-

New, Guinean language, Sephardic Spanish or Maltese. It is less clear if I am learning an international language like Spanish or English, which are vehicular to many diverse cultures.

If you have cultural experiences or cultural thinking you would like to share, the Scottish Tesol Newsletter may want to offer what you write a home. The web'zine which I edit, HUMANISING LANGUAGE TEACHING, [www.hltmag.co.uk](http://www.hltmag.co.uk) would certainly welcome such contributions.

H.L.T. DIGITAL  
Humanizing Language Teaching

## Relating to Language The Joy of Speaking and Writing the T.L.

Mario Rinvoluceri, Pilgrims, UK

As a trainer, I find that teachers on in-service courses have varied attitudes to the languages they teach. As a person in love with language ( MT and FL's) I find it hard to train people who seem not to love the language they teach. And this is an absurd trainer deficit in me, as a good trainer gives more to their weaker trainees, and a trainee who does not relate well to her subject is surely a weaker "student" on an inset TT course.

Let me suggest to you that, in my experience, there is a spectrum from teachers who are head-over-heels in love with the language they teach through to people who openly show that they don't care about the TL or maybe dislike it.

### Teachers of "minority languages".

My experience of training such people has been with colleagues who teach Basque and Welsh to adults in their respective countries ( Cymru (Wales) and Euskadi (the Basque Country) For these teachers, speaking and writing and swimming in the TL is

- their identity**
- their belief**
- their skill**
- their preferred behaviour.**

Though I was invited to work with the Welsh teachers through the medium of English and with the Basques through Spanish, and though all are fully bi-lingual in terms of **skill**, I quickly discovered that it was best to work through an interpreter so that my voice did not resound round the room in the language of the oppressor, the suppressor, the age-old enemy.

With these teachers you can talk of a missionary love of the language they teach, mixed, though, with a feeling of maternal care for the difficulties faced by the learners, and with a deep desire to help these learners who honour their age-old tongue by committing to learning it.

To be invited to do training work with "minority language" teachers is perhaps the greatest honour and joy I know as a trainer.

### Teachers of English who are natives of the students' MT \*, and who have a good command of the TL.

These people have worked long and hard towards mastery of English and a few of them have achieved a virtual native-speaking way of managing the language. Many have achieved extremely high levels of proficiency. Such people seem to have grown a genuine **secondary identity** as speakers of English and they often have strong positive **beliefs** about the language, its many varieties and its many cultures. You recognise these people by the way, even at workshops on English teaching held in their own country, they will motivatedly and happily speak the TL the whole day

long. They are often very modest about their **language skills** and let you feel that they still have three more base camps to reach on their way to the summit of their language Everest.

These teachers are a gift and a privilege for a trainer to work with.

**Teachers of English who are natives of the students' mother tongue \*, but who have a shaky command of the TL.**

These teachers fall into at least three categories:

1. *People who did a full degree in the TL but who did not have the linguistic skills to deal effectively with their course, or who went to Universities so under-funded that there were 200 students in the oral production classes.*

Some of these teachers carry their difficult experience forward from University into their teaching job. They often get pretty demotivated, especially if their students are willing to help with this! I don't think these teachers are expressing their **personal identity** as they stumble through the TL and you feel that their **belief system** has not been much affected by contact with the language they teach.

These are people you will rarely find in voluntary inset workshops (European ones would be unlikely to apply for Socrates or Lingua funding to do inset training in a TL country). My guess is that, world-wide, there are very large numbers of EFL teachers in this boat.

2. *Specialists in language A whom the State has obliged to retrain to teach language B, most often English.*

Just after the 1960 political break between Khrushchev and Mao Tse Tung around 350,000 Chinese teachers of Russian were ordered to retrain as teachers of English. After 1990 teachers of Russian all over Middle Europe had to remould themselves into teachers of the language of the Super Superpower.

In Spain, in the early 90's, intensive programmes were set up to convert French teachers into purveyors of English, the language that parents were demanding their children learn.

Many of these folk had consciously chosen to teach a language they loved, Russian or French, and they did not feel good about having to switch to English, some of them in their 40's and 50's. Some felt the politically ordained change violated their **beliefs**, and the older ones found the taking on board of a whole new language sorely tested their linguistic **skills**.

In training such people, I have deep sympathy for the feelings of anger, confusion and regret they both exude and verbally express, yet, of course, such feelings make the achievement of a good outcome to the training course considerably more difficult.

3. *The wave of primary school teachers across the globe, from Taiwan to Germany, who are being asked to add English to the core curriculum they teach.*

In 1995 I watched middle-aged primary teachers whose level ranged from post-beginner to lower intermediate giving themselves whole-heartedly to an English class in the expectation that in the following year they would be teaching the language to their 8 and 9 year olds. This was in Pusan, South Korea. These South

Korean teachers were highly motivated to climb the Everest of English- in their **belief system** it was clearly a right thing to do. But not all of them were born language learners and for some there was a fierce problem at the level of linguistic skill.

As a trainer with such participants it is vital to work from their positive **beliefs** and not let yourself get depressed by any perceived **skill deficit**. The strength of their positive **belief**, I think has to do with their strong wish to do the best by the children they teach. They hate the thought of being a faulty language model.

**Teachers who are not natives of their students' MT but who are natives of the TL \*.**

World-wide this is a minuscule proportion of Modern Language Teachers but in each modern language they make an inordinate amount of noise and hold more than their share of the gate-keeping positions.

I personally feel ill-at-ease with those of them who are not warmly involved with the language they teach and who fail to relate strongly enough to language to set about learning their students' language.

This group of teachers are now in a dicey position as more and more EFL opinion-formers begin to stress the obvious importance of MT as the major scaffolding for the learning of L2. Expatriate teachers over the next ten years will come under increasing pressure to master their students MT.

This will be hard for them, as they are possibly the least linguistically gifted group of EFL teachers anywhere in the world. Many of them studied quite other things at university. For many, language has not been their first choice.

**Modern Language Teachers working in countries where there is socio-linguistic aversion to learning any foreign language.**

At an ML Conference in Dublin I spoke French to the person next to me as we waited for a lecture to begin. It was clear he felt this was out of order. He was a teacher of French.

I have been invited to animate groups of French teachers in UK and my host has requested that we use French as the working language. In some cases this turned out to be an uphill struggle especially when the language ability range in French went from rusty native to lower intermediate. The striking thing to me, though, was not so much an inadequate knowledge of the target language but more the unspoken reluctance to use and live in the TL for a few hours. For quite a number of people an inset day speaking and listening in French felt like an imposition rather than a joy and a heaven-sent opportunity.

Why should UK and Ireland have a number of ML teachers with this mindset? I think the answer lies in the sociolinguistic attitude of their students who can see no point in

learning French, given that they already speak THE international language. Maybe you can only expect a teacher to be as good as her students.

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In conclusion: it is a privilege to work with inset groups of teachers whatever their state of mind about the language they teach. Yet, I have to admit that the language lover in me secretly ( and maybe unprofessionally) prefers a trip to Aberystwyth to work with gungho teachers of Welsh than one to Manchester to work with worn down teachers of French.

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\* I refuse to use the current imperialistic terms *Native speaking EFL Teachers* and *Non-native speaking EFL Teachers*, or *Nest* and *Non-Nest*. I feel this is a like defining a woman as **human/ - male**, which was a stalwart mediaeval male way of perceiving women.

Biodata: over the past 3 ½ years Mario has edited **Humanising Language Teaching**, that you will find at [www.hltmag.co.uk](http://www.hltmag.co.uk). His latest book is **Humanising your Coursebook**, Feb 2002, with ETp Delta and his next one, due out in late 2002 is **Using the Mother Tongue**, co-authored with Sheelagh Deller, is also with ETp/Delta. Mario's first CDrom came out in 2000 with Clarity, Hongkong and has now been licensed for use in all British Council schools round the globe: **Mindgame**, written with Isobel Fletcher de Tellez.