

Dear Everybody,

First I want to congratulate the birthday girl. Why didn't you tell us it was your birthday on Wednesday, S■■■■? You say that in the afternoon you went shopping with other girls from here. After that you were very hungry and you rushed to table and began eating. The food was excellent. When you have your birthday at home, in the Ivory Coast, what do you normally do? Do you eat at home or do you go out to a restaurant?

Are birthdays important in Turkey and Saudi and Korea? I know they are in Italy and Switzerland.

The end of yesterday's desert story, M■■■■, is this: "The Yemeni was left all alone in the desert. When the genie asked him "what do you want?" he says "I feel very lonely, please bring my two friends back here!"

Maybe for Arabs, friendship is very important. Is this true, M■■■■?

Well, J■■■■, my Japanese is still at a very low level. I find it quite hard to really take Japanese in. But but it is good to study a bit each day. Japanese is very very different from English.

Are there many words that are the same in Korean and in Japanese? Let's take "jagaimo" (potato) "sakana" (fish) "ureshii/ shiawase" (happy) and "ki" which means tree or wood. What are the Korean words for these things? Please tell me more about your experience learning Japanese.

L■■ you have given me a detailed description of your room here in Girton. What is your room back home in Korea like? Which room is bigger? Which room has more light? Does your Cambridge room face the South? And your room back home?

You are living in the room the daughter of the family used to live in- how do the people in the family feel about her going? When did she leave home?

Si■■■■, you write: "I sometimes feel like a poor baby born today-I don't know how to speak English, I don't know the city, I don't know anything." I sympathise with you. You are feeling lost. I have often felt lost in a foreign place. I felt this when I first went to Japan in 1986.

You say that when you speak English you are translating from Italian. Do you translate in your head, Se■■■■, from Italian when you are speaking to me? Do you translate in your head, J■■■■, L■■ and J■ when you are speaking English in your host family?

Has anybody in this group dreamt in English yet? This is very important. If you dream in English you are really absorbing the language.

J■■ your letter answers Se■■■■'s one about freedom. You write:

"What is freedom? I walk on the ground. I cannot fly in the air on my own. If I can't use English yet, I can't talk to you."

Rare people have freedom. They can escape from themselves.

I am not engaged and I am not married and I don't have a boyfriend, so can I say I am free? "

Se██████o, was this the kind of freedom you were talking about? #u

A██████, you said you had 35 sweethearts in a year. Did you really manage to have that many? Did you have three girlfriends a month for 12 months? When you said this people in the group seemed amazed. I was surprised too. Maybe you can tell us more about this in your next letter.

Yours,
Mario.