

Wed

Dear Everybody,

I am a blithering idiot. I managed to leave all your letters up in our room and now there is no way I can reply to them. They are stuck on a round, white table in Keynes, nine miles from where I am now. I was looking forward to reading them as they bring me much food for thought and show me each person in a different light.

From six-thirty to eight this evening we had a staff technical meeting and taught each other new teaching ideas. We do this every week, though the level of exchange of technical ideas in this staff is very high, even outside official meetings. Attendance at these meetings is voluntary and maybe half the people come.

I learn huge amounts each summer and I am not the most ignorant person around.

Then from 8.00 to 10.00pm there was a small sea-food dinner party in a nearby seaside town for one of Pilgrims's best trainers, M [redacted] from Poland, who was celebrating her fortieth birthday. She is not teaching on campus at the moment. In Gdansk, Poland, she owns and runs a school with 70 full time teachers. The party was quite emotional.

Then back home for a final chat with my son and his wife before they disappear to France on holiday early tomorrow morning.

A full day and a happy day. Lunchtime was spent with the DOS of our Executive English Centre, helping him to prepare to address a conference in Riga on Saturday. He will be speaking to about 200 teachers of business English from all over the three Baltic Republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. He is giving a plenary on teacher self-confidence.

At coffee break this morning G [redacted], our DOS, asked me to prepare to run a train-the-trainer course after I come back from my fortnight's holiday. I was scheduled to do another English for teachers course. He really twisted my arm to get me to accept the switch of courses. He said things like " I can't sleep at night worrying over who I can get to run this course ". I know he really does worry about his work so I finally gave in and accepted the change. It is annoying as I am due to start writing a book this autumn to help tutors who work with non-native teachers on their English.

Too bad. Sometimes Pilgrim's needs have to take precedence over my pet projects. C'est la vie. (this is a bit of French we often use in English and it simply means " that's life ")

Do you use bits of foreign languages in your mother tongue? How about in Italian M [redacted]? Or in Chinese, C [redacted]?

This is not really a letter. It is more like a diary, as I seem to be talking to myself in your presence. It is a sort of inner monologue on the page. Odd.

A [redacted], today your German mate offered my a nice ambiguous sentence in German:

Das Barometer faellt.

This can mean these three things when you hear it (not when you read it)

- The barometer is falling (from the wall)
- The pressure in the barometer is falling
- The barometer is missing

This is like the ambiguous sentences you can make in Japanese with KUMO, with HANA and with HASHI.

M [redacted], how many meanings do these sentences have:

L'ho fatto per mio fratello

Vestiti per piacere ?

Everybody, how many meanings can you find:

- Do men sell better than women in Japan?
- They swam for Taiwan
- What an idiot I am to teach!
- Can I have a taxi for five , please?
- To be fair, Tom divided the sweets equally.
- Everyone loves his mother.
- The postman delivered the baby.



A question for the Japanese colleagues:

Why do teachers in your neck of the woods spend so much time outside class getting brilliant rapport with their students, treating them with respect and love, and then teaching them in class in a rather unexciting way.

This ^{is} a real mystery to me.

Setsumei kudasai. (Please explain)

Maria