

Dear Monday People + A [redacted] + C [redacted] F [redacted],

As I write to you late on Tuesday night I wonder what evening program things you have been to and how they have been for you. People who have been here over the last month will maybe have been back to the same thing twice. This can be very useful from a language point of view, especially with very rich text like the Welsh lady's.

G [redacted], you know how hard it is to hear your own voice as others hear it? Well, maybe the same is true of your language progress. Maybe your colleagues can appreciate it, even if you can't. Have you checked out with them? You may get a "thumbs up" appraisal from them.

T [redacted], you side-stepped my question about the differences between Okinawa and the main islands in the archipelago by telling that to answer this question would be hard. You mention that the island has been run by the Chinese, the Japanese and then the Americans. What did the Chinese leave as a cultural heritage? How have the Japanese mixed with the local people?

Do you have plenty of North Korean " Pachinko " parlour owners on Okinawa as elsewhere in Japan?

How different is the place from the nearest bit of Japan which is Kyushu island?

You have an eager reader- please satisfy his greedy curiosity!

In your letter, C [redacted] F [redacted], you mention that you have a wee baby. I wonder how much she has transformed you and your wife's lives? Has she made your wife very different? Many people in our group have children, so maybe your thoughts on becoming a Dad would interest more than just me.

S [redacted], I too hope that you will feel the work we do this week is relevant to you. I wondered if Tuesday was OK for you. I hope to be able to stretch you without letting anybody else in the group slip by the wayside. Do you know the expression " to slip by the wayside "?

No, S [redacted], I would really prefer not to correct your letter as the aim of this correspondence is to persuade you to take a few risks on the page and to enrich your language. The few slips you make in your letter are unimportant.

K [redacted], I hope you are now well and truly out of jetlag. "Well and truly " is a strong collocation , that borders on cliché ( Ch [redacted] spoke about clichés yesterday ) When I go to East Asia the first two days there are pure torture, as I toss and turn ( another collocation ) at night and yawn through the days. Oh dear, the same will happen when I go to Korea in October. How do old doddering politicians manage to cope with jetlag?

You speak of the way English is taught to poor Japanese secondary school kids. I saw a very good teacher do a straight grammar translation lesson two years ago in Kyoto. She did not utter a word of English, nor did her students. They did read out some translations in English. To me it seemed just like the way I learnt Latin, a well and truly dead language.

Yet she was in excellent rapport with her class- the girls were really with her.

I could have learnt loads of Japanese if I had followed her lessons for a semester, and, since she felt a nice person I would have wanted to learn!

Thank you for all your letters- the next batch will surely be both meatier and longer.

Good night,

Mario.