

First Tuesday

Dear Everybody,

This morning I need to get a sense of what you mostly want from the course. After a day's work together this is a much more reasonable request than the same request back in May when your minds were focused on other matters and when only very future-orientated people could possibly have been genuinely interested. It is very hard (Rolf, I could've used "difficult" but "hard" was the word that my fingers chose in the keying-in process) anyway, to really know what one reasonably wants until one has some idea of what the other can provide.

For me this course hovers over the following areas:

1. Conscious language work , which we did from the morning break yesterday until the end of the day. (Language as **having**, language as a string of exponents.)
2. Relational work, which sucks language out of you (as happened on the walk and in the subsequent group-feedback. (Language as **being**)
3. Cultural matters (we stuck a toe in these waters when you summarised Swedish culture in 5 sentences) This area could be of interest because in as much as you have immigrants in your classes who come with their funny, marvellous, Swedish-frame-shaking presuppositions, beliefs and behaviours. There has been a lot of work done in business studies that deals with cultural negotiation. (Amazingly, the Swedish reaction to the influx of Pinochet-generated refugees turned out to have been partly wrong precisely because it was so full, thought-through and perfect- this was the verdict of a team of Chilean psychiatrists in the early 80's)
4. Methodology- the tool-bag of techniques that we all use in class to get things going.

Maybe you have other areas you want to explore? Maybe some of the above is as clear as mud to you!

When you have finished reading this letter maybe we could have a discussion on what you want in the with the whole group.

I do need this for my fantasising/planning.

Methodological thoughts about yesterday's work.

Ex 1. The presupposition here is that people come from their own reality and that my job as teacher is to get a wee peep at that. It makes group sense, too. At 9.15 I had no inkling of the complex relationships that clearly exist between Linköping, Norrköping and smaller places like Soederköping. And I have added heather and marsh/swamp to my tiny stock of Swedish lexical items!

By trying, largely unsuccessfully, I have to say, to impose slants on what you said about your bit the country I hoped to assess the vocabulary richness/ poverty ion the group and this is based on a perception that may be wrong that in Swedish you go for simplicity in expression, and that the plethora nature of English vocabulary leaves you feeling a bit uneasy. (Wild language generalisations)

The principle behind the exercise is the teacher as traveller, however inexperienced, in the land of the participants' concerns.

Ex 2. This is a cultural exercise I pinched from a Finnish website which is based on the idea of asking people to indulge in huge generalisation, but in ways that may sometimes surprise them.

Ex 3. The idea of the "walk" comes from the work of Bernard Dufeu (Teaching Myself, OUP, 94). Much of his work is based on Moreno's psychodrama and the role-reversed reporting to the group is one of a rich family of role-reversal exercises (you will find many more in The Recipe Book, Pilgrims-Longman, 1994)

Ex 4. The idea of asking L2 speakers to correct native mistakes is one that hit me in the last two months and yesterday was the first testing of this exercise. It immensely pleases me because of

implicit power reversal. I don't think I gave you enough help, though- I should have explained a lot more clearly and given you several examples. I felt that some people were ploughing... a bit, making heavy weather of the task.

Ex 5 The tautology work was also a first time testing... the exercise was too easy for our group but I was delighted at R's defence of tautologous expression. He made me realise that some prescriptiveness was creeping or marching into my thinking. Yuk... what I most dislike in language thinking.

Ex 6 The listening we did with M is, for me, an old classical activity that I do with all advanced groups. I think it is immensely rich and hope it will act like a virus... it will leave you with analytical listening habits in whatever L2 you are working in. If the texts are strong and rich then we are in both language as having and language as being. (This distinction may or may not be clear one for you- if it is blurred, please ask for further explanation)

Some technical thoughts on yesterday work, at a superficial level- I am well aware that a lot of powerful things were also going on in the group.

Yours warmly,



Mario.

HLL: DIGITAL
Humanizing Language Teaching