

PERSONAL REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

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Bognor Regis. 13rd October 2015

Yesterday we had a relaxing day just having a walk around the buildings on Campus, and getting to know how the library works, what an amazing amount of resources, by the way, not only the huge selection of books and materials on line, but also the computers and facilities! It makes me aware of the importance of having enough resources around and to have a warm and welcoming environment, it is highly motivating. The Library has on the ground floor an area with a cafeteria and sofas to socialize. This is a great idea, as students often need place to gather and organize team work, for instance.

Simon and Dave show us Chichester around: the cathedral, the Priory Park and the walls, Chichester Cross with his main to streets facing North and South, West and East, as it was traditional in Roman cities; we even visited the Mayor at the City Council!

I have just moved to another home-stay. I was wrestling with the situation in the previous one, but finally I made up my mind to talk to someone at the University, I couldn't have been there for seven weeks, I couldn't even concentrate in the classes. And I am so glad I took that decision! I understand now better how some of our students behave like they do in our classes. They are just kids, and having problems at home doesn't make things easy at school...

Tomorrow it will be a fresh start!

Bognor Regis. 14th October 2015

PART 1. I am sure that most people will agree with me on this: the course so far is absolutely worth it. We feel motivated, the teachers make us think about so many different aspects of the teaching and, at least, in my case, I am taking notes of every single detail, how do they start the class, how do they interact with us... I have also noticed that they take their time, they seem quite relaxed... I am thinking how I feel many times in front of my group of more than thirty teenagers being pretty aware of the contents I must cover in just two hours per week and sometimes I feel such a pressure that I know I don't convey the calm I should in class... Anyway, apart from the specific concepts we have seen with Francisco, I really appreciate the new slang words learnt with Kathy. I find it very useful to know them, specially taking into account how difficult it would be for us getting to know those expressions being foreign teachers. I am sure this will be, apart from interesting from a linguistic point of view, very useful for our teaching experience with English students in three weeks time.

PART 2. Today I had a good night sleep indeed and during breakfast César, the classmate who lives in the same house, and I had a nice conversation with Alf, Jenny's wife. Both are really nice people. He is Portuguese and was telling us about his job. He used an interesting expression to show how he

feels on a busy day after work: “going up and down like a yo-yo” because his office is on the fourth floor and it is just boring to wait for the lift.

I am usually shy, and I find it difficult to talk in English when I am with a Spanish person who really masters the language, which is the case with César, but I push myself and tried to talk as much as I could, taking part in the chat naturally. And I did it.

Bognor Regis. 15th October 2015

PART 1. Today morning I learnt a new expression. I had never heard about it, but I found it quite easy to understand the sense from the context. My new landlady is quite different from the previous one, actually just the opposite. She likes everything to be perfect at home, and she told us several things about how she likes things to be done in the kitchen, for example. I personally find this very understandable even convenient for both parts, so I will feel more confident while being at her home. But after the chat she said, “I don’t mean to have a go at you, really”. She didn’t want us to feel embarrassed... Then, after the class with Kathy Reina, I asked her about it, just to check if I had understood it correctly. I learnt that is quite common between parents and children. Interesting, as I am feeling a little bit like a child and, in a certain way, she is, for the next seven weeks, kind of a mother to me.

PART 2. Today I didn’t really talk to anyone after the classes, apart from the family I am living with, but as I was recalling things for this part of the task I suddenly remembered a most interesting conversation with Dave and another Art teacher from the group last Sunday. We were at the Dom in Chichester and there we found an amazing modern tapestry just in the place where in other churches there is the altar. Dave and other colleges said that that didn’t match with the surroundings, but then another Art teacher and I, really impressed by the beauty of the contrast tried to explain to them the reasons why we thought that was interesting. First of all, a church, like any other place, should be something alive, and change with the times, as everything does. But then we knew where the problem lied: abstract visual messages are difficult to understand to people who are not used to them, actually it is a code that needs to be learnt, like any other language. The problem is that people seldom find the opportunity to do that, I mean, even at schools teachers don’t devote very much time to talk about modern art... and it’s difficult to appreciate, not to say enjoy, something you don’t understand, something that has no meaning at all. And it’s a pity, because art should make us dream, make us fly beyond everyday thought... and that will never happen if we don’t have the keys to get inside, to get along, to get beyond what we see.

Bognor Regis. 16th October 2015

PART 1. Alf is Jenny’s man, he’s Portuguese but he has no accent, and looks completely like an English man. Today I learnt a new word from him during dinner time. He was telling us a story from his younger years and he used several times the verb click in different contexts referring to someone not being aware of something or precisely becoming aware of it. “They didn’t click we could understand every word”. They make a nice couple! By the way, after complaining about something she called him a drama queen! I might well go to dinner with my notebook next time, otherwise I will forget such valuable information.

PART 2. Even when it is not completely natural, all of us are trying to talk in English the whole time, also after the classes and that will be really rewarding after these weeks. It's important to push yourself if you want to improve it doesn't matter in which field.

And by the way, I made good use of the expressions we practiced in class today for communicating ideas in a diplomatic way during dinner time at home. Yesterday though, I was not so successful using the word naughty in the sense we learnt at school, as slang, but it was well worth having a try.

Bognor Regis. 17th-18th October 2015

PART 1. Yesterday the whole group went on a beautiful trip to Sussex Villages with Dave and Simon. We visited West Wittering and East Head; Bosham – which, by the way, thanks to Simon, we learnt has a Saxon origin, as any other town ending in “ham”-. We went on to Harbour village, Midhurst with its lovely ruins and we enjoyed the outstanding views by the Trundle. Finally, we met Charlie and other people from the university at “The fox goes free”, a really charming pub and inn. They told us about the tradition of fox hunting in the past, but that nowadays people were not that passionate about it because they had developed certain empathy for the poor fox. Actually I have seen the hunting in many classic films and it was interesting to know about its evolution. I thought it was similar in Spain with bullfighting. Current sensitivity clashes with this sort of traditions.

After such a beautiful day, though we were more than tired, César and I were invited to go with our host family to Selsey bonfire and fireworks. This takes place every year and in different places in the area to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night.

One of the things that struck me more was how enthusiastic our landlady got about the idea of having a fun-fair ride. Unfortunately for her, the rest of us were not that enthusiastic about it and I almost got sick at the very thought of it... The fireworks were amazing indeed, but around half past ten we were exhausted. Anyway, the day after some of us took the train to Arundel. I can't believe how lucky we have been so far with the weather, by the way. In the train I learnt two new words and expressions. The first one is *to alight a train*, which means to get off the train. The second one is to come across a word, which means the same as find it. It's nice to learn not also from the teachers at the university but learn also from our mates. I am so happy to have the chance to share so many things with them... it's a pity that in our schools we hardly find time to talk and discuss with our fellow teachers.

PART 2. It's amazing the amount of things I learn from Alf. He's so talkative! Today I learnt quite a few expressions while he was telling us about someone at work that is not exactly a hardworking person. These are the expressions I learnt:

- When he's *in his right frame of mind* –meaning good mood. Saying that he's not on his right frame of mind would mean that he is on a bad mood.
- *He eats like a pig and drinks like a fish* – meaning that he really likes eating and drinking a lot (alcohol). You could easily suffer a *hangover* after drinking like a fish.
- *He went bananas* –meaning that he went crazy.
- *To mess up* - to make a mess
- *He's playing with fire*, which actually has the same meaning in Spanish.
- *Whether you like it or not* -not difficult to guess, and with strong meaning.

- *To break wind* -something that though I will never use, I find it useful to understand, just in case someone use the expression in front of me.
- *Who on Earth are you to...!* Hard way to express that someone has no right to do something
- *I am fully aware of...* I like learning words that go well together!

And that was just tonight, incredible, Isn't it?

Bognor Regis. 19th October 2015

PART 1. Today morning everything was about the different types of schools in England. Obviously, there are some things in common with Spanish schools, but the differences are greater. But what shocked me the most is the amount of test that a student must go through along his/her school life. It is terrifying. I know that just a few students would work if there would not be any sort of assessment, but it is terrible to feel at that short age under such a pressure. I am sure that this situation leads to health problems in many cases, physical or psychological... and that hurts me; as Kathy said, it is *nerve breaking*.

Between games and other activities, I learnt some nice expressions like "to elicit a word" or this other one: "*on the plus side... on the minus side...*"

PART 2. Today during dinner time Jenny and Alf were talking about the National Health System. They complained about the amount of foreign people that are receiving free health assistance in England. They said that the system had *broken down* and that they thought it was not fair that paying nothing they had the same rights than people living and working here. Surprisingly this was one of the few things I was talking about with my previous English family, so I guess it's a big issue at the moment. They set the origin of the problem at the fall of Berlin Wall because, from their point of view, in that very moment the massive migration coming from the East started.

In Spain some people share this opinion. But if we think about it carefully it is not black and white... If we didn't take care of ill people, we as a society, could get into big trouble, diseases could spread easily, for instance. We live in a fast, ever changing world, and things are not easy any more.

We did talk about education aswell. They complained about the lack of discipline at schools but it is not the teachers who they blame, but the parents. I learnt here another interesting expression from Jenny: students *have the upper hand*. They told us about a close family with a difficult teenager. The parents let her do whatever she wanted as a child and there came a moment when they couldn't handle the situation. "*Things have gone from green to red*" said Alf – I really enjoy his, in more than one sense, colourful expressions.

Bognor Regis. 20th October 2015

PART 1. Today, just after the break, something happened that marked a turning point, the teacher praised my previous writing with kind sensitive words. As a student I appreciated it really a lot, but being a teacher it reminded me how easily we can make a difference in a student's life, just by paying attention, and being aware of our students needs and feelings. Learning should not only be about acquisition of knowledge but about growing as human beings, sharing from our personal experience and giving our students tools that we know will be useful for their future lives beyond school. And

when the teachers achieve that goal, really deserve to feel proud of themselves. I am not only writing this for me to remember but for thanking warmly my dear teacher for being such a good one.

Part 2. Today I went home directly from the University, even when the weather was so lovely... But I really need to catch up with staff, and if I am lucky, go soon to bed!

During dinner Alf started talking about things going on at work. He is actually quite happy with his job and he generally feels appreciated by the customers. He said that some of them are *big-headed* and behave as if they were better than people working there, and then I used something I learnt this morning from a classmate: the verb to look down on others. "*If the boss supports you, you are ready to support him; but if he doesn't you lose interest*". And that is, by the way, what happens in the learning process between teacher and students.

Bognor Regis. 21st October 2015

PART 1. Probably, the most important thing today took place during the break. I was starting feeling exhausted with the amount of work that we have to face every day, and I realized, talking with other mates, that it was not only me, it was a general feeling. I am really enjoying this course, probably more than any other course before, but the problem is that I feel under pressure the whole time, and I feel a bit frustrated because I am fully aware of how great teachers are in the group and that we don't find time to share experiences, ideas, resources... on the spur of the moment, not as part of an external task, because it is then when the most unexpected and valuable things come up. All of us are dedicated teachers, we love our job and don't really need external stimuli to talk about education. Actually, it is one of our favorite topics! Apart from that if we can't enjoy what we are doing because we have the feeling of constantly falling behind, we will not do our best, even when trying hard. On the other hand, it's about either getting lots of average exercises or a smaller number of excellent, meaningful ones.

PART 2. Today I had to cancel a date I had set at one o'clock yesterday with a woman with whom I am going to start a language exchange because I needed to meet with my group to prepare for a presentation in the afternoon... Anyway, as usual, I had a chat during dinner with my host family. Today I asked them about colour idioms as part of my research on that for the presentation. First, they couldn't come up with any, but then they started finding some, but, to be honest, Alf had to search on the internet on his mobile phone.

I wrote them down: *red zone* –meaning a quite serious danger-. A *blackout*, is used when someone faints-. *Once in a blue moon*, means something that happens very rarely-. A *golden opportunity* is a very good one. *To catch someone red-handed* means to catch him/her doing something illegal. *To paint the town red* (light) is something that young people would say before having a good time. *Every cloud has a silver lining* means that despite the problems, things always work. *To be black and white* means to be crystal clear, but it could be used when someone judge things in a radical way, without taking into account the small details that make them neither absolutely good or bad.

I noticed tonight how often they use the expression "*if you know what I mean...*".

And talking about films, Alf said that Jenny was *glued to* horror films, I like those visual expressions in English language.

Bognor Regis. 22nd October 2015

PART 1. Today after class some of us had a cup of tea together and it was so nice to relax and share with others our feelings and points of view about the whole experience! These days I missed this a lot. Focussing only on the academic part of the Program doesn't make sense. An important part of it consists precisely on mingling around, have time to reflect and enjoy every single difference with our culture. That's one of the beautiful things about traveling, having the chance to look at your own life and place with perspective, because the *contrast* is one of the secret parts of perception... Everyone should experience living abroad, it gives you the taste of other culture and makes coming back home something sweet, as we appreciate things from another angle. In a similar way as we love when spring comes specially because we have just endure the winter –and I am not saying that England in this case would be the “winter”, well, I might be a little bit...- Just trying to practice British humor!

Part 2. For the second time, in pairs, we conducted a questionnaire on Campus with six questions related to a language English aspect of our choice as part of the preparation for the presentation to be given on the 2nd of November. The conclusions we drew were quite interesting, actually. First of all, the people we talked to found it quite hard, to say the truth, to come up with some of them. But what caught my attention the most was the fact that in Spain English teachers really emphasize idioms, as an important part of British culture in language, while here, not only the students we asked, but also my family host, couldn't easily remember some. Then I asked one of the students in the library if she thought they were a little bit old fashioned and her answer was that younger generations, though they understand them, they don't use them so much while their parents do. And the final conclusion was that as language is alive and ever growing, it's impossible to be up-dated if you are not in real contact with the country, if you are not exposed to the culture through a real interaction with people and current media.

Bognor Regis. 23rd October 2015

PART 1. Today the most interesting thing was the time spent in the morning class sharing ideas with other teachers about the way to implement the activities and methodology we have been learning about. It's really useful to listen to other's ideas, it even makes you change your own, or at least modify them. And many times someone else had already come up with the perfect solution to a problem you have been coping with.

PART 2. Today in the afternoon class with Francisco we all practice what we had learn with Kathy about polite ways to express disagreement, or just nice ways to express our thoughts. I believe we have now clearer ideas about what we are expected to do. And, as Kathy said, sometimes it is just fine to give 85% instead of 110%. Otherwise we take the risk of losing the whole picture and not achieving an important goal: enjoy the experience! That is why this weekend I set another target: relaxing and breathing to get ready for what is still to be done.

Bognor Regis. 24th October 2015

PART 1. It was high time to take a real day off. And so I did. As Alf said tonight it is really necessary to *switch off* regularly, otherwise you get worn out. It was a wonderful day despite the drizzly weather. I

took the 700 Bus and went to Emsworth for a walk and then again to Bosham. I really enjoyed it! Time to think, to reflect and assimilate these two weeks.

PART 2. At dinner time I learnt new ways of expressing that you ate more than what you should have eaten. Jenny cooked a delicious shepherd's pie, that's why. In those cases you can say: *I'm full up* or *I'm bloated*, but also you can say: *I'm stuffed*. Tonight the time shift for daylight saving. Neither Alf nor I were sure about what was the way we should do it. But Jenny told us an easy way to remember how it works: *in Spring the clock springs forward, in the Fall the clock goes back*. Nice and easy!

Bognor Regis. 25th October 2015

PART 1. I joined a group of teachers to take the train to Brighton to have a walk along the Seven Sisters. What a breathtaking landscape! All of us agreed that it was the best thing we had seen so far. I doubt human beings can create such a fantastic thing. The scale helps, obviously, but it is not just that. Rain, wind and sea have been carving the white steep cliffs for a long, long time and made them just unique. The weather was fantastic, a little bit chilly, but sunny. You don't realize how important the sun is until you arrive in a land where the sun is missing most of the time. Actually, I think the weather shapes the character of people as well. It is quite easy to verify if you compare people from the south and people from the north, even in the same country!

PART 2. On the bus to the Seven Sisters I met a retired Music teacher from Chicago. We were talking for almost an hour and it was such a delight! I found a golden opportunity to practice the language in a natural way, with Spanish people it is always sort of weird. She told me she had been travelling around for some months. I asked her if it was not hard sometimes, but she said that, being nicer to share things, she found it very interesting. She added that it was quite easy for her to start conversations and meet people. I think she was a brave woman. But the most incredible thing was that she was learning Spanish! Before getting off the train we exchanged email addresses and we planned to keep talking on Skype. Isn't it amazing?

Bognor Regis. 26th October 2015

PART 1. I am so excited! Today I received an email from the American teacher I met on the bus yesterday. This means that our language exchange will be real. I have always found it difficult to meet people to practice English. In this case, I am not only going to improve my language skills, I am sure it will be a rewarding human communication. She told me in her email that she had a wonderful day there, she met more people and they even drove her back to her own door. I guess that life smiles at you when you are genuinely positive, when you keep your eyes open wide and you are always ready to smile back!

PART 2. During lunch I met Vicky for our language exchange. As she used to be a teacher, we have lots in common. Today she was telling me that many people are not in favour of free schools because they get money from the Government and they usually are set in areas where wealthy people live

and, obviously, mainly wealthy students attend them. She was concerned about the fact that they were so independent while they were supported with the taxes that everybody paid... She thought the whole thing was not fair.

Apart from that we were talking about politics, following the topic we had had in the classroom. I learnt another way to say monarchic: *royalist*. She said that Jeremy Corbyn was *a breath of fresh air* after a long time of bipartisanship where the left party had gone slightly to the right. However, she told me that she thought that it was a quite natural going from one extreme to the other... And I quite agree with her. People get tired of something and look for a change when the opportunity comes.