



Learning by doing

This is me, on my first Speech and Language Therapy placement. I'm 'assisting' with a swallowing assessment in the radiography department (they let me mix the different barium liquids and pastes!). The course has been quite intense and almost entirely theoretical so far, but this week we get a chance to see how it works in practice.

Already after 2 days I can feel the difference in my understanding. The new concepts that were just diagrams on my tutors' ppt slides have become real people with complex difficulties in speech and swallowing, which my colleagues are working to resolve. Having this chance to consolidate all the theoretical learning is incredibly motivating!

It just brings home to me how important it is for our learners to use their new language in genuinely authentic situations. When I have had adult learners with me in Lancaster for extended periods, I have found them opportunities to volunteer in organisations where they could talk about things they were interested in (animals, sailing, clothes etc).

It's quite a big step from the safety of the classroom and the sympathetic host family to the wide world where people have different ways of talking, and might not have time to repeat and explain everything. But it's so worthwhile, particularly if we find time to 'debrief' afterwards, so they can talk about things they heard but didn't understand, or how to respond when asked particular questions.

What kind of opportunities do you / could you find for your learners to use their language 'for real'? Has working online encouraged this or hindered it?