

Volunteers: Joyce,\* Cliff, Jon

Students: Hyunju, Yoko, Jing sun, Natalia, Guosheng, Younghye

The Discussion topic today was “Birthdays.”

We used **part of the story, Helping a New Worker” with the B group.**

We divided into two groups soon after arriving. Joyce was with Group A; Jon & Cliff with Group B.

Group A: Yoko, Natalia and Guosheng

Group B: Hyunju, Jing sun and Younghye

The discussion went well in both groups. With-in a smaller-size group and being with others who contributed at about the same level, every student had a chance to speak and all did so with little prompting.

We discussed special foods prepared in Korea and China for birthdays. These are nation-wide traditions, which is rather new to us. In China, very long noodles are prepared, as a symbol for a long life. In Korea, Younghye told us seaweed soup is traditional and she explained how it is made. When noodles are served, they are cut on the plate with scissors for easier eating. In China, conversely, cutting noodles would not be done, as it would indicate shortening the life of the birthday celebrant.

Hyun ju explained that birth-mothers eat seaweed soup for one month after giving birth to reduce swelling and fortify with minerals and iron. So this is eaten on the child’s birthday as another reminder of the birth.

Jing sun told us her 12<sup>th</sup> birthday was special because the animal signs for the years rotate on a 12-year cycle and this was the second time the celebrant is experiencing the year of their birth animal. 24, 36, etc. are also special birthdays. She would buy and wear red clothes on her birthday for good luck. A similar, enthusiastic discussion was held by Group A. Participation was high.

In Group B, Cliff then went over a list of idioms related to birthdays and age.

Pronunciation:

In Group A, Joyce used the exercises from her GPLC book and Jon observed to learn the method. Today’s exercise focused on the difference between long “e” (sheep) and short “i (ship). The students enjoyed practicing hearing and saying the different vowel sounds. Surprisingly, Guosheng was able to explain and help Natalia understand instructions on several occasions. Joyce left the room once and when she returned they were all conversing in English, the only common language among the Chinese, Japanese and Brazilian students.

After the idioms, Jon returned to Group B and asked if they wanted to practice their listening and pronunciation skills. All three enthusiastically said they did. I used the method from my Boston ESL book. We got through part of a Level 1 story from our website, “**Helping a New Worker.**” I was surprised they had difficulty hearing and repeating the sounds. We did less than half the lesson and will continue to use this method with Group B. Either of the two methods can be used with Group A.