

Conversational English: Wednesday, October 4, 2017. Class # 25

Volunteers: Jon* and Sylvia

Students: Rainbow, Jing sun, Guosheng, Marie.

The Discussion topic was “**Things I have Never Done.**”

We used the story, ***Cell Phones***, to practice listening and pronunciation skills.

The discussion was started by Rainbow, who told us she had never ridden a camel. The two words, “ridden” and “camel” were a bit problematic but eventually we were able to know what she meant and Sylvia and I explained the tenses of ride, rode, ridden and write, wrote, written (which is what we were hearing instead of “ridden.”) Both Marie and Rainbow were asking grammar questions and writing the answers down so they would be better able to express themselves.

I asked if anyone there HAD ever ridden a camel and Jing sun said she had done so in the desert in China, in the ancient city of Dun Huang. She soon found pictures on her iPhone of her and her husband and son riding camels. We asked how she got onto the camel and in trying to explain, she needed help with the word “knelt” so we wrote that and “kneel” down for her and the others. She then said she has never tried sky diving but would like to do it. Marie said she is afraid of heights and would never sky dive. Sylvia provided the term for her fear of heights, *acrophobia*.

Guosheng, in response to Sylvia’s question, said he had never had a cat. His grandmother had a black cat that catches mice around the house. We veered for a while into the topic of North Korea and how close it is to parts of China and the students all shared facts about how people try to cross the river to China from North Korea.

Marie was very interested in trying to learn proper grammar and forms of words, tenses, etc. Guosheng was nervous and I must remember to not call on him suddenly, but to give him time to think and contribute. He spoke quickly and was having trouble being understood during the discussion but spoke much more slowly and clearly in the pronunciation segment. Rainbow is very eager to learn, too, and takes many notes and repeats things until she understands the words and the word order in a sentence. Jing sun has better pronunciation and listening skills and is very good in helping the others. She asked me after class how to hear the difference between “can do” and “can’t do.” We practiced a little in the hallway but I have to agree it’s a tough one to hear when we speak as rapidly as we do.

We used the level 1.5 story, *Cell Phones at Work*, for pronunciation practice. We let each student read a paragraph as the others repeated the words they heard. I asked if they like this or if they prefer we read the story. Marie said we have better pronunciation,

so probably us reading is better. I do think that even though Sylvia had to correct some of the pronunciation along the way, it was a little easier and more lighthearted when the other students pointed out words the listeners had missed entirely, instead of one of us doing that again and again. (They aren't hearing the articles, pronouns and the word endings.) So I would say we can do it both ways and sometimes we read each sentence and other times we let the students take turns reading a section of the story a sentence at a time.

The story was about a man taking his cell phone to work and turning it off when he punched in. We explained "punch in, punch out" and "time clock." I told them to try to picture what the sentence was telling them, seeing the man walk to the time clock and turn his phone off. I got up and acted it out for them to show what the words were telling them. I think if they can listen to a sentence and picture what is happening in the story, it will help them in conversations, where they are so focused on each word that they don't hear the meaning at all. It reminds me of someone learning to read, when they read each word but can't tell you what the sentence was about. I'm not a teacher and some of you who are will be able to shed more light on this.

Both Guosheng and Rainbow asked for a copy of the story to take home. Gousheng wanted to see the words and Rainbow said she was going to have her husband read it so she could repeat the sentences.

They were a small but talkative group. We all enjoyed the time and stayed until about 8:20.