

Conversation Friends

Class # 44

7:00 pm – 8:45 pm

Date – Wednesday, 11/15/17

Topic - Friendship

Volunteers – * Jon Elizabeth Sylvia

Students - Rainbow, Guosheng, Yoko, Jing, Marie

Jon's Notes –

After we each told if we had a best friend and a little about that person, I realized I'd forgotten to break into two groups. They all immediately indicated they wanted to just stay together, so we did.

Rainbow has a best friend back in China, with whom she used to work. They still keep in touch. Her friend has a degree in computers and now works as a translator (English). Jing's best friend was her college roommate. They remain friends and communicate with each other. Marie has a best friend with whom she grew up in China. They ran into each other last year when Marie was home. They each have a son and a daughter who are the same age and are friends. Marie's parents worked and she often was alone after school with her older brother. Her friend kept her company. Yoko said her best friend is her husband. She had friends in Japan, colleagues with whom she worked and also mothers of her son's friends. She has a few Japanese friends in America now. Guosheng told us he has a friend who is also his uncle's friend; he is older than Guosheng but is a man in whom he has a lot of trust and confidence.

We discussed the fact that it gets harder to make friends as we age, whether a man and woman can be "best friends," and what people do when friends get together in their countries

Jing said Karaoke is popular. She also said many women retire at 50 in China and, with nothing much to do, join in large groups who dance to loud, modern music, often outdoors in parks or on basketball courts. This causes conflict with people who are bothered by the noise and with youngsters who want to play basketball..

Rainbow said people can sit and drink tea for many hours, sampling different types of tea. Her friend's sister has many, many types of tea for people to try. There are also those who square dance.

Guosheng said in his village people mostly gathered and talked. There were those who played mahjong for many hours every day, betting money on the games. Sometimes a man "owns" a mahjong table and the others pay him to play there.

After the discussion, we tried out two types of exercises meant to improve language skills, both of which involve describing something.

First we played a form of Taboo, with words naming different foods. I cut apart words from a list and put them in a cup. They each drew one and had to describe the object without using the word. I did one first to show them. They caught on pretty quickly but needed prompting to think of other ways to describe something when the word wasn't guessed by just saying, "We eat it for breakfast." Other ways would be where it comes from: milk comes from a cow, etc.) and how you could use it. (Bread- make toast, use it on the outside of a sandwich, etc.) There are other, harder Taboo wordlists on our website and printed out on the shelves, but we started off

with the easier, food-related words. We did one round of these before moving on to the next exercise, which was describing pictures found in several books I'd brought to class.

First we used two children's easy-read books that I got from Sewickley Library, *Winter* and *The Five Senses*, both of which have very sharp photographs of people doing various things, sledding, building a snowman, sitting in a theater watching a 3-D movie, smelling a flower. Each student was asked to select a picture and tell us five sentences about what they see in the picture. They enjoyed selecting a picture they liked and telling us about it. Jing was the most entertaining, choosing a picture of a little boy smelling a poppy. Besides describing the photo, she imagined he was smelling the flower and having a happy memory about the aroma. She was good at describing the picture but, as with all of them, needed some correction in the pronouns and sentence structure. They generally mix up "he/she" and the possessive "his/her" as well as the objects, "him/her."

I told them their descriptions had to be in complete sentences and I also let them know when they needed just one more sentence. I think Jing had several more than she needed. It's important to note that she was very much taken with the looks of the little boy in the photo and the fact that he didn't look "white" but maybe was "Central Asian" and commented on his dark hair. I think when looking for images for these and other exercises, we should always endeavor to get pictures of people who are all not blond and white. Luckily, most children's books these days are very multi-cultural so that will help.

Guosheng did very well describing the children watching a 3-D movie. He took his time and seemed to be a little more at ease with this exercise than he usually is. Maybe because he could choose the picture and had a few minutes to think of what he wanted to say about it.

After they all had a turn, I brought out another library book, a large "coffee-table" book on world travel, *Nat'l Geographics' Journeys of a Lifetime*. I had jotted down a list of pages where they might find a suitable picture to describe and that saved some time. They each took a turn and did pretty well. The pictures were more complex and detailed so they had to search for the words to describe what they wanted to say. I asked if this was more difficult and they agreed it was. But they each managed to give us at least five sentences, or five near-sentences. Rainbow probably had the hardest time, Guosheng next.

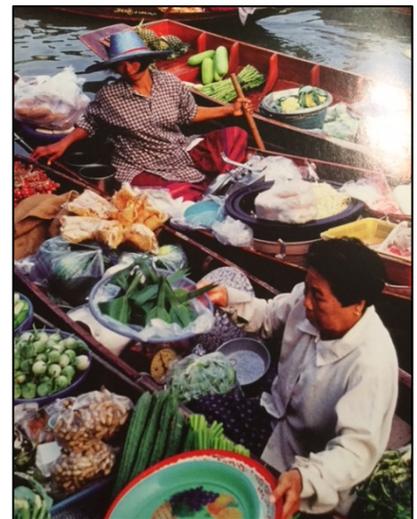
Everyone was having fun and we finished at about 8:45. Samples of the photos we used are seen below:



Winter



The Five Senses



Journeys of a Lifetime

I asked them to email me and tell me whether or not the two exercises were helpful and whether they liked them, saying they should be very honest with me.

After class, Jing stopped me to say she found both methods helpful. She said that it would be even more helpful if, whenever she makes a mistake in her English description, we correct her and immediately have her repeat the sentence correctly so she can learn the proper way of wording her sentences. I think we did this tonight but probably not as formally as she would like. I think we could also write down the corrected sentence and go over all of them at the end of each round.

Yoko emailed me already and here is what she offered:

Thank you very much for teaching us tonight. Each practicing was fun and good practices for me. Guessing word was like a kind of game, so we enjoyed very much. (This would be the Taboo game, with food words tonight.) Explanation of pictures was also good, but I would like to listen to each volunteers ones, too because listening to native speakers is helpful for me.

So, in the future we should each also take a turn in both Taboo and in describing pictures. We did each describe a food word tonight in the Taboo game but we didn't describe a picture in that segment of the class.

All in all, it was a successful class. Everyone spoke and I think everyone enjoyed the class.