

000223 Yantai on Tuesday

Hello all!

Today was our last day of practice teaching at the experimental school. I found that although I still had trouble coming up with lesson plans, the presentation of the lessons got easier. I got a real surprise in class on Monday. The school switched the students that we had from 8th grade to 6th grade. The difference in levels was readily apparent in their understanding of English. Lessons that the 8th graders mastered in minutes were over the heads of the 6th graders. I wound up having to set aside my lesson plan of words that have more than one meaning to teaching what a noun and verb are. The lesson did not go as I had hoped, but it flew by leaving me with more material to cover at the end of the 50 minutes.

Overall, I am enjoying teaching. I am anxious to get my real classes so that I can see how well I relate to them. Today in our TEFL training we worked on long term lesson plans. One volunteer from last year started the year by asking her students where they would like to travel to. She then expanded over the next 6 months to cover transportation, packing, culture and other ideas. I hope to find something similar that the kids will be interested in. One of the WorldTeach (WT) volunteers came up with the idea of planning a party. They will carry this theme all semester and end with some sort of party in class. I think that the kids will love it.

My class on Friday covered comparisons. I taught things like big, bigger, biggest and the like. I had hand outs for the kids that had drawings of things such as three people where they would indicate which was tallest. At the end I asked them to draw their own comparisons. There were two groups of girls, each on a side of the class. It was interesting to see that they almost all drew a comparison of three girls who were thin, thinner and thinnest. I see that the idea of thin being ideal does not just hold for the US. There was of course also some humor in the classes. Lisa (our WT director in China) told us that the Chinese do not like feet and that they find socks and shoes to be a little humorous. Alex (one of the WT volunteers) asked a question of his students about what they like to do after school. He mistakenly thought that one said "wash socks" and he wrote it on the board. His kids thought that his doing so was pretty funny.

On Saturday night I woke up to find that I was pretty cold in bed. My room does not get above 60 degrees F during the day, let alone at night. Actually most places are pretty frigid here. Outdoors I wear my boots with both poly and polartec socks, long underwear and pants, a t-shirt, a button down shirt, a sweater which is 200 weight polartec, my polartec jacket and a gore-tex jacket. At night I have my electric blanket (never thought that I would actually use one of these), two blankets, my wool hat, a sweatshirt and pants. The classrooms are frigid and there is nothing worse than cold hands covered in chalk dust.

Last Sunday I went to church with Brian from WT and a woman named Jessica who has been here in Yantai for a year. She led us through a market and into a church that we never would have otherwise found. The church was large with a balcony running along the sides. The congregation was of course mostly Chinese, but there were probably five westerners

including myself. Jessica told us that the church lost contact with the Vatican a long time ago and never renewed them. Therefore, the church is pre-Vatican 2 style. It was only last year that they stopped having services in Latin and the priest faced the congregation. Coming from a more liberal church experience at the Newman Center at Wash U, I did not understand some of what went on. At the end of communion, the priests did some last prayers and then went into a back room. I thought that mass was over until they came back out, but with different shawls. They then did a lengthy veneration of the host including incense and a lot of other things. Jessica has been volunteering at the church as an English teacher. She is to leave Yantai for good this week, so they will be asking me to help. I never thought that I would be volunteering from my volunteer work.

Actually, I have gotten asked to help people with their English a lot, usually once a day. Other schools in the city are eager to get us to help them and individuals ask quite often as well. I will probably wind up finding someone to do a language exchange where we speak in English for an hour and then in Chinese for an hour.

After mass, I went to English Corner at DiDi burger. It is a place where people can come to speak with foreigners. I sat at a table with six people and we spoke about a variety of subjects. They were very interested in the WTO and emphasized how much they expect it to affect their lives. They spoke of the banks changing and how important knowing English will be. They spoke of Chinese goods being inferior perhaps to ones from the USA or Japan, but they are also a lot less expensive. I have heard this argument before in regard to cars from Korea such as the Kia. They may not be as good as the competitor's but with price tags that are thousands of dollars less, how can you not consider them? I think that this attitude permeates most of their products. For example, their plastic cups are very thin and will easily bend in your grasp. However, they do hold liquid and that is what they were made for.

Speaking of goods, there are several large department stores here in Yantai. By large I mean 5 or 6 stories tall and packed full of groceries, electronics, clothes, paper goods, you name it. When you go in one of the first things that you notice is that the number of staff people equals then number of customers. It is intimidating with my poor Chinese to look around with several "helpful" staff on my heels.

Last Saturday was the Lantern Festival. I believe that it marked the end of the new years celebration for many. The streets were crazy with people lighting off fireworks everywhere. The night air was constantly pierced by the sound of firecrackers from every direction. The city also got into the act with a large display over the ocean. Last week, people that I know went to work, but they mostly spoke about their new years and did not work. So, this past Monday was the real start date for most people after a few weeks of vacation.

We will all disperse to our schools and start teaching next Monday, Feb 28. Jason and I have been busy in our free time cleaning up our apartment and adding some features. The place had not been used for six months and so was covered in coal dust. Yesterday I purchased some bowls and plates so that I can begin to cook at home. My tutor, Amy has promised to teach me how to make jiaozi which are something like boiled dumplings. We went to lunch

with her and her family last week and that is what we had.

Fruit is readily available on the street. There is an alley by where I live where vendors bring carts full of produce to sell. Fortunately we have been making lots of friends and so they have told us the fair price for produce. Haggling is fun, but the vendors will always start at 35 for an item that I know is 5. At night, there are other vendors that line a street that I often walk up after dinner to get home. They sell, shampoo, clothes, posters, lots of music and vcd's, fruit, shoes, etc. All of the vendors that sell music all usually have the same song playing and it is the same every night.

Ok, I must run, but future editions will be forthcoming. I am still enjoying it here although the pollution wears on me at times. At soon as I open my door in the morning I am greeted by a wave of smoke from the coal fires. I also miss the variety in foods. I love to cook and so I miss being able to do that and to change what I eat. Not that the food is not delicious here! And if I want a taste from home there is always KFC and DiDi burger. The people at DiDi are so nice to us. We have been holding our Chinese lessons there because my tutor works part time at DiDi and full time at a university. The managers at DiDi bring us out water and tell us that we are welcome at any time. Sometimes they sit in our lessons to listen to our English.

Overall, people here have been really nice to us. With how bad my Chinese is, people really need to work to figure out what I am saying to them at times. However, between my Chinese getting better and their efforts, I can usually get across what I am trying to say.

On another note, I am very excited. My parents emailed to tell me that I passed the Professional Engineering Exam. I am now a registered engineer in MO. I am so relieved. I put so much effort into that and the test was not fun, but at least it is over!

I am off to haggle on some oranges and then off to TEFL. Talk with you later!

Jeff

 [Previous](#) | [Next](#)  | [Return to Main Page](#)
