

000510 Television

Every one of the WT volunteers made it back from their Labor Day holidays safely with the exception of Alex. He never left Yantai due to losing his bag containing his passport. Yipes. He may have left his bag in a cab or in a restaurant before he realized that he no longer had it. So, I got to witness the initial process of trying to get a new passport. Thankfully the staff at my school have been very generous in taking him to all of the places in Yantai that he needed to go to get a police report filed. Seeing as a US passport is rumored to fetch \$10,000 on the black market, we did not expect to see it again. However, last Monday his passport, journal and computer disks were turned into the PSB by some kind soul. Needless to say, Alex and Lisa were ecstatic despite the loss of a camera and CD player.

From watching the English news on television, I have learned that the government made the Labor Day holiday last seven days this year in hopes that people in China would travel and pump money into the economy. According to my Chinese friends, travel during the holiday period would have been unheard of only ten years ago because people would not have been willing to spend money in this way, if they had the money to spend at all. I have friends who live in Yantai who have never left the city. But according to the news, the Chinese Government has now learned how much money people are willing to spend on their holidays. Popular tourist attractions were impossible to access due to the length of the lines. That is why the news also added that a second lesson that was learned was how unprepared China is for so many people to be traveling at once. From what I have been told, the tourist industry of today has made amazing progress from only a few years ago in making travel easier for people. It will be interesting to see if the Labor Day holiday will be changed next year or if China will spruce up the tourist industry even more.

Over the past few months, I have gotten a lot of my world news from the English news on television. It is interesting to compare what I watch with what I hear from the VOA or BBC broadcasts that I get on my short wave radio. I have also had the chance to check out what is offered on the television here in Yantai. The cable network offers 27 channels at my school. One station currently offers Beijing Opera all day long. I have tried to watch some of these, but I have not been here in China long enough to appreciate them. There are also channels that show NBA games or football games from around the world.

Occasionally, some of the stations show movies in English. Back in March, one station had a James Bond marathon which Jason and I watched diligently. However, most movies that come from Hollywood are dubbed over in Chinese. One such movie that actually caught my attention was Mulan, the Disney movie. I did not understand the words, but I had seen the movie before on a plane on the way to London last year, so I understood what was going on. What kept my attention were all of the little things that I saw that I am beginning to understand are Chinese. Maybe I read too deeply into things, but it was interesting watching it after having lived here for a time.

However, the most entertaining part of the TV broadcasts are the commercials. Oh yes, they are just as annoying as they are in the States and even more so because they are often run twice in a row. But, what is amusing is the content. Some offer bad translations, especially a

commercial for an English language course. They talk about how well you will speak if you use their product and at the end they make a grammatical error in their English. There are so many commercials that hawk snake oil. Not literally snake oil, but drinks or lotions that will make you thinner, taller, smarter or stronger. There must be dozens of commercials just for products that will increase breast size. There are also products that will make your child smarter or more alert. These are a little worrisome and I see my students drinking them. However, I guess that it is no different than all of the kids in the US on Prozac or Paxil. A common advertising technique for all of these products is to show what the product will do to the body through computer animation. So, a product that is designed to clear your arteries will show happy molecules racing through the blood stream, destroying the bad molecules.

What I have gleaned from the commercials is that commercialism is alive and growing here in China. However, I doubt that there is yet an oversight body like the FDA to protect people from the snake oil sales people. It reminds me of the developing US of the last century where people bought into similar gimmicks (or actually, I guess the US of today still does). I hope that an FDA type body is formed here soon.

Classes

On Tuesday, I started a new lesson for my NBS students to teach them the names of places in the city. These included places such as hospital, zoo and hotel. The lesson was also designed to teach such phrases as "there is a.." or "there are..". Lisa asked to sit in on a class to give me my midyear critique. Thankfully, she chose the second class of the day, rather than the first. The students of the first class were little monsters. I had to review my class rules about being quiet while others spoke. Eventually it got so bad that I sent some kids out of the class which I have never done before, but they were too disruptive.

For my J3 classes, I had a class about different careers. I taught them new careers such as social worker, fireman and other English words that they were not familiar with. I asked my class what was the most important thing about their job: money, that you like your job, fame, creation of something, or helping people. The first class wanted to like their job. The second wanted to make lots of money.

My J1 classes this week are learning prepositions of place such as by, near, on, above. I show them examples of each word using props. Next I have groups of students come to the front of the class to act out words while the rest of the class tries to guess the word that they are showing. It has worked well so far and will lead into future lessons.

That is all for now. I hope that you were able to get my photos despite servers all over being shut down by the love bug virus. I sent the photos as attachments last week.

Take care,

Jeff



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