

001104 Chicken Burger

Burger King

Saturday was the third anniversary of Didi's Hamburger. The restaurant celebrated by holding a birthday party and an eating contest. People signed up and paid a fee to see how quickly they could eat three Didi's Burgers. The winner would receive a new VCD player. Patrick, a volunteer from Ireland who is part of another volunteer program and I both signed up for the contest along with 35 Chinese men and women. Groups of five contestants ate at a time in front of a cheering crowd in the restaurant. The contest was a lot of fun and I am excited to be able to listen to Chinese CDs on my new VCD player. Since I can not legally take the player out of the country, I will probably wind up donating it to the school, WorldTeach or the church. But, it will be a lot of fun for the next two months. J

Chicken

This is a story about a day that I had before the incident that put me on crutches. I went to visit my friend Li Mei (mantou woman) at her sister's chicken stand in the market. I arrived to find only her sister inside the little stand. She invited me in to sit down with her and to wait for Li Mei. Li Mei's sister speaks no English, so after about ten minutes we had run out of things to talk about. So, she offered to run to get Li Mei. I protested that I was afraid that a customer would come and that she would lose business because I would not know what to do. She pointed at a price list taped to the sliding, plastic window and she was off.

I didn't know what the meat cuts laid out before me were even called in English, let alone Chinese or in characters, for that matter. The meat cuts included sausages, chicken feet, chicken wings, wing tips, pig snouts, whole chickens (including the heads), balls of shrimp, balls of pork and other goodies. I know that they use the digital scale to determine how much meat they are selling and the cost, but without knowing the starting cost I could not use the scale. So there I sat, alone in the booth, hoping that no one came. Actually, I was hoping that someone I knew would stroll by to see me working in the booth, but no luck. A few people strolled up but then strolled off with a weird look on their face at the foreigner sitting behind the counter. Finally, Li Mei came running up and took over ending my short career as a sales person for the Bonzai Chicken company.

Lessons

This week, the mid-semester exams for students were held throughout Yantai. The exams were held on Thursday and Friday and both the students and the teachers were stressed out from having to jam so much information into the students' heads. So, I did not have to teach on Thursday or Friday. Several of the other WT teachers left for Beijing to camp out on the wall. I would have really liked to have gone, but Simatai on crutches did not seem the best idea.

I am currently teaching my students a two-part lesson. The first lesson involves teaching the

students Tic-Tac-Toe as a way of introducing location words. The students all know that game. I teach words like bottom, top, top-right-corner, center, etc. The students must then use these words to play Tic-Tac-Toe on the board. Two teams will come to the front of the class. One student from each team will participate in a round of rock-paper-scissors to determine who is first. I have no idea what this game is called in Chinese, but all I have to do is mimic the actions and the students catch on right away. Next the students must call out which square they want to the student who is responsible for marking on the board so that I can sit down. They must use phrases like “center square”, or “left column, top row” to indicate which square they want.

After a few rounds, I also teach shapes such as square, circle, and rectangle. I then draw one shape in each square of the Tic-Tac-Toe grid. The students must now tell me not only which square they want, but the name of the shape drawn in the square. The lesson works well and is a good introduction for the next class.

Part two of the lesson involves the distribution of index cards to the various teams. On each card is a simple drawing of shapes or perhaps a person next to a house which is next to a car. One student from each team must go to the front while the rest of the team tells the drawer in English what he is to draw. The drawing can be a little sticky at first until they catch on as to what I want. The lesson is a good review of the location words, shapes and prepositions-of-place. Some of the students get into the drawing as well, calling out “summer tree” or “winter tree” to tell the drawer what they want.

This week I will also teach some of the older students about the US government as the election is around the corner. I have a copy of my absentee ballot that I show and use to introduce voting, elections and the structure of the government. The ballot has produced some interesting conversations at both English Corner and in my adult tutoring classes. However, as my kids are not as advanced and as I don't want a political discussion that will get me fired, I just hope to teach them about the government. We shall see how that one goes. I am afraid that it may be over the students' heads in which case I will need to fall back on a backup lesson.

Unsuccessful Marketing

I “walked” to church on Sunday to find that the market which used to line the alley leading to the church has now been demolished. Heaps of rubble and a few stray vendors are all that is left of the once bustling street. Yet another market has fallen victim to the city’s “improvement” program. It used to be so nice to walk to and from church in the colder weather as many of the vendors roasted chestnuts in large drums. The smell was amazing and last week I finally bought some. The chestnuts were piping hot and just melted in your mouth once you popped open their shells. I am glad that I got to try them at least once. Now there is only one market left that I know of around my area of town. I wonder when it will go as well. I also wonder where people will buy their vegetables and meat products as the grocery stores do not carry either.

Take care,

Jeff

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