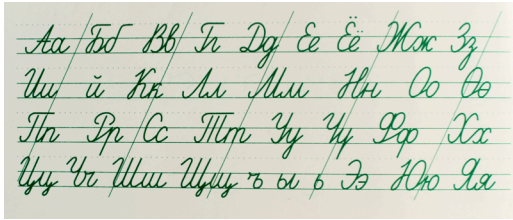


Saturday, November 3, 2012

Another busy week in our little city of Khovd. Monday is our scheduled tutoring night with Undarmaa so we met with her for a couple hours. Woody served us dinner and we spent a lot of time on letter sounds and the script letters. The



Mongolian alphabet is based on the Cyrillic alphabet but originally was made up of sounds from the Tibetan language. Not all the Russian letters function in the same way that one might think. (In fact, not all the letters are used for Mongolian words.) The “f” is only used for many foreign words: foto, fitness, etc. The

Mongolian sound is a mix of f and p so I am forever asking the students/ teachers to put their teeth on their lips and say “f” words. Needless to say, if it is difficult for the Mongolians to say our “f” you might imagine how difficult it is for Woody and me to say their sounds.

My teaching load includes two classes of sophomore University students that meet three times each week, two classes of juniors who meet three times each week, and then four classes of English Club (American culture for 1.5 hours each week with the sophomores and juniors.) About 10-12 students come to class each session so I have a total of about 50 students. Most of these students are Mongolian, although a few in each class are Kazakh from Bayan Ulgii, the aimag (state) northwest of Khovd aimag, and one or two are from Uvs aimag (directly north) and Gobi Altai aimag (west and southwest). I also have about students that come from Mongolian regions in the far west of China. Their homes are over 2000 km from Khovd.



This week was also the Juniors (3rd years) in the Russian-English Department’s Halloween Party. On Friday (10/26) of last week in my last class of the day, the class of 10 women asked me about a Halloween party and what it might take to have one. Apparently, the Dean had suggested that they ask me to help them. We had been discussing Halloween in our previous English Club meeting (Tuesday/Wednesday of last week) so they had a general idea about it.

Although thinking about entertaining large groups of people makes me nervous, I could help them think about what was needed for the party. If you follow Woody’s notebooks, you will know that the Chinese-English Department Freshmen are responsible for a Halloween party in that department and were holding one that Friday night. (The Russian-English students/faculty were not invited to it but I think there must be some communication between the two departments.) I think the students must room together in the dorms or even become friends with each other

despite the fact that they don't share classes. (We are, after all, in the same hallways and lunchroom spaces.)

So, on that Friday, we dispensed with the planned lesson and began the discussion about Halloween; food, decoration, and party games. When a pause came in the questions and brainstorming, I asked them if they wanted to discuss the possibilities in Mongolian. They crowded around each other and began a lively and animated discussion with lots of giggles and excitement. Although I hadn't been involved in this type of activity before, it seemed unlikely to me that they would be able to carry off a party in five days in the magnitude that they wanted. Ha! Never underestimate the energy of a determined group of people. (Another lesson for me.)



So, during this week, I was asked for a few translations of party game instructions and speeches. This event was an English event for the Juniors. They would be presenting everything in English. The invitation arrived on Tuesday morning: costumes required, competition for pumpkin carving, best make-up, and best costume and the buzz started in the other levels. Woody helped me with my black cat mask on Tuesday night and since he was invited, he wore his cow mask again.

On Wednesday night about an hour later than originally planned, the students informed us (other students and faculty) that the party was ready and we could come. The evening was very tame but there were a lot of activities. Decorations of cats, ghosts, and black spiders were on the walls. Two of the classes (and the instructors) had somehow found pumpkins (orange and green ones) and cut Jack-O-Lanterns. The instructor's pumpkin won the "best pumpkin" but I think it was a consolation prize. I cleaned out the pumpkin and the head of the department carved it. (I have the seeds in the oven roasting this morning.)



The games included four bowls of flour where contestants had to find prizes with their mouths. (No hands allowed!) Sounds a little like bobbing for apples? A string with bread threaded on it and covered with sweetened condensed milk that contestants had to eat. What do we call that doughnut game? Since the bread fell off, the contestants had to eat the bread anyway. (Yuck!) A few games where contestants were grabbed or frightened in different ways and the mummy wrap with toilet paper.



There was dancing apples, water, and of the evening, candy "trick or treat."



and a few snacks (cookies, cut-up candy) on the tables. At the end was dispersed by Juniors calling

The Juniors had all dressed and white. Their make-up and some kind of product in trying to scare others by out from behind pillars in the plastic spiders with us. The and the different classes were fun. Mostly the party was for party and photograph each other long after we all left for home. And the rest of their studies that week were a wash as they recovered from the event. I was very proud of their speaking skills. All of the instructions were given first in English and then in Mongolian. And in their creeping around the room, they were speaking English dracula words, "I smell human blood."



and decorated themselves in black was mostly ornately painted faces their hair. They spent the evening creeping under the tables, jumping room, and sharing homemade party was considered a success also costumed and enjoying the the planners. They continued to

Despite the internet were all able adapt their the difficulty with cold But, clearly



lack of computers in classrooms and capability, these ingenious young adults to find information about Halloween and own ideas about it into a party. I imagined of clean-up of all the make-up and hair goop water and the few available paper tissues. these people are resourceful!

I loved their own reflections of the party when asked to do a Quickwrite on Friday. I hope you can enlarge these so you can read them.

Handwritten text on graph paper, likely a student reflection. The text is written in English and describes a Halloween party. It mentions that the party was very nice, that they wore black and white costumes, and that they had a lot of fun. The student also mentions that they were very happy and that the party was very good because they were very happy. The student also mentions that they will miss celebrating Halloween.

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