

Invitations and Requests in a Restaurant

David Dockhorn

ddtraveller [at] yahoo.com

Sarakhampittiyakhom High School (Mahasarakham, Thailand)

Introduction

This is a conversation activity that focuses on making invitations and requests in the context of dining at a restaurant. My Thai students are normally very shy to speak but they love to do this activity. The students play the roles of customers, waiters/waitresses, and managers in a restaurant.

This gets the students speaking spontaneously and all at the same time. It's something they really like and you can do it again and again and add to it and really refine their language until they are quite fluent in making requests and invitations. It also gives them an understanding of the vocabulary surrounding restaurants and the cultural context of dining in an English speaking country.

Step One

- If your students are unfamiliar with requests language then teach the language of making requests.
 - Would you like...?
 - Do you want...?
 - Yes, I would.
 - Yes, I do.
- Then after drilling and going through some examples like "Would you like to go to the movies?" and "Would you like some french fries?", etc.

Step Two

- Run your students through the process of dining in a restaurant in an English speaking country. I simplify it a bit for my 12-13 year olds and tell them to do the following.
 - order drinks.
 - order an appetizer
 - order food (the main course)
 - order desert
 - ask for the check
- Explain the language associated with these steps for the waiter and customer. For example,
 - Waiter: "Welcome to Dave's Restaurant. Tonight the special is monkey brains. Can I start you off with something to drink?"
 - Customer: "Why yes, I'd like some milk."
- Teach the students about problems at restaurants as well such as; bad or slow service, rude waiters, cold food, a fly in the food, a rat in the restaurant, etc.
- Also, explain some language regarding forgetting to bring your money or not having enough money to pay the bill. This is the most fun part for the students, complaining about the restaurant and not having enough money so this is an important part to make sure they understandxs.

Step Three

- Write down the name of the restaurant on the whiteboard, the daily specials, and some menu items and prices.
- Choose an assistant manager and ask them to pick some waiters.
- Give your waiters a quick reminder on their initial greeting to give guests and send them out to their tables.

- Have your assistant manager help with any slow or bad service complaints and wander around to make sure the students are participating and help pacify customers who are upset with the cold food and bad service. My students love this activity because they love to complain about the bad service, etc. and see the manager reprimand the waiter for being rude or slow. Also, most of the tables end up not having money to pay for the bill and have to wash dishes or the police have to be called.
- This activity may degenerate if some of the tables have gotten their checks and these students start to play or kick-box with their waiters. At this point you can promote your best waiter to be the assistant manager and pick some new waiters. Usually I let the assistant manager pick but I also pick students who aren't participating or are causing a ruckus.

Repeat

Then run through it again. The students also enjoy outrageous menu items like monkey brains, buffalo steak, human pizza, etc. and extremely high prices.

The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. IX, No. 10, October 2003

<http://iteslj.org/>

<http://iteslj.org/Lessons/Dockhorn-Restaurant.html>