

GONPA GAZETTE



Learning English by reading books.

“What the hell are you doing here?” a shedra (college) monk asks, practicing his English on a school monk.

The shedra monk and I speak English daily in the dining hall before meals. I took the liberty to intervene, talking about ‘bad’ words in English, and offering their ‘good’ alternatives. “Hell is disrespectful. Heck is respectful. What the *heck* are you doing here?”

After a few more exchanges, the shedra monk innocently asks, “But when I drop something and it breaks, I say, shit, right?”

Well, not exactly! “That’s what you see in pictures. That is not

what respectful people say in America. The respectful word is *shucks* or *shoot*.” Maybe you had to be there, but the entire interaction was amusing to me.

The first time I heard a little monk say ‘shit’ I was incredulous: What was he saying and where did he learn it? Then I learned they watch action pictures! Just like toddlers whose native language is English, they have perfect pronunciation, inflection and context; but no idea of the meaning!

The next time the shedra monk came to talk, he asked me, “What the *heck* are you doing here?” Great; mission accomplished!



Learning English through songs and hand games.

JULY 2020 IN PHOTOS

