On September 14, 2013, the proposal for two professional teacher-training courses on Theme-Based Instruction for teacher trainers and schoolteachers in Serbia will be presented to the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, University of Kragujevac, Serbia. The first training course will consist of a one-day training for trainers workshop specifically tailored to service to approximately fifteen teacher trainers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The second course entails in-service training specifically for schoolteachers of English. Such training entitled Primary School Teacher Training in Theme-Based Instruction will be a one-year In-service Professional Development Program tailored to meet the needs of approximately 200 schoolteachers. The one-day in-service course entitled Primary School Teacher Training in Theme-Based Instruction will consist of four 90-minute sessions to be followed by the submission of their theme-based projects to be posted online. The one-day in service course will be accessible in many districts in Serbia and offered multiple times throughout the academic year 2013-2014. Both courses intend not only to have participants become aware of effective techniques but also have them explore necessary teaching skills required for developing and applying thematic units in teaching English to young learners in primary schools in Serbia. The project aims to contribute with the effectiveness of the delivery of instruction of English language teacher trainers, and primary level schoolteachers in the Serbian State via the application of engaging thematic unit plans in teaching English to young learners.

**Hosts:** Department of Education in Jagodina at University of Kragujevac in Serbia

**Participants:** 10-15 teacher trainers and approximately 200 primary school teachers of English

**Program:**
- (1) one-day face-to-face Training for Trainers workshop for EFL teacher trainers
- (2) one-year face-to-face in-service professional development workshops, offered multiple times

**Schedule:**
- (1) Training for Trainers: One-day face-to-face workshop
- (2) Multiple In-service Teacher training workshops for EFL Primary schoolteachers:
  - Dates for workshops: Academic year 2013-2014
  - November 9, 2013 and November 23, 2013
  - February 17, 2014 and February 24, 2014
  - March 24, 2014 and April 21, 2014
  - June 9, 2014 ad June 16, 2014

**Goals:** The program has both specific and global goals, such as:
- To develop trainees' knowledge and skills to create and apply engaging and effective thematic units in their teaching contexts;
- To increase effectiveness of teaching English to young learners; and
- To contribute to children's positive attitude to language learning and to the development of their critical thinking and autonomy in learning.
**Problem Identification**
The trend of lowering the age to start foreign language instruction began at the end of the 20th century and has now spread to almost all parts of the world. The age in which students start learning a foreign language has shifted from 11 or 12 years of age to 6 to 9 years of age or even younger. This change has affected teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language dramatically. In fact, most non-English speaking countries in the world are veering towards the teaching of English as a first foreign or a second language as well as implementing curricular changes to the primary curriculum. Serbia is no exception. In 2003, the Serbian Ministry of Education and Science introduced English as a compulsory subject in the primary curriculum from grade one (students aged 6-7). English is now taught in about 90% of Serbian state primary schools.

In Serbia, teachers who teach in state primary schools are mostly qualified EFL teachers with bachelor degrees in English and literature. These English teachers have been educated at faculties of philology or philosophy at five state universities. However, the undergraduate Programs at these universities do not offer undergraduate courses in teaching English to young learners (TEYL). Instead, the Program focuses on general EFL methodology courses, which usually only include TEYL as one topic. As for student teachers’ teaching practice, the syllabi offered does not clearly state whether these courses provide student-teaching observation or student-teaching practice in TEYL before graduation. Unfortunately, it is customary for the recent graduate to start teaching without having had adequate coaching or mentoring from a veteran teacher. Since their effectiveness in the delivery of instruction depends on the exposure to TEYL approaches and strategies, the novice teacher exclusively depends on the limited in-service training to enhance the process of learning.

Therefore, the implementation of the Theme-based approach and application of instructional strategies can considerably enhance the effectiveness of language instruction, for they facilitate children’s language acquisition and cater to language developing by tapping on all language skills. In sum, the thematic units will make language learning more holistic by creating conditions for more natural foreign language acquisition and learning.

**Contextual Analysis**
The training will be carried out in two phases: The first phase deals with training teacher trainers and the second phase centers around training primary school teachers in-service. These two groups will be trained in two distinct venues: the University of Kragujevac in Jagodina, Serbia - organized by the Department of Education in Jagodina, and in host schools throughout Serbia. The institution is located in Pomoravlje District (central Serbia). University of Kragujevac in Jagodina already provides pre-service TEYL methodology courses for student teachers of education. These courses prepare the student teachers to become classroom teachers and teachers of English to young learners (YL). In addition, the Program provides in-service training workshops in Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test Essentials and organizes a traditional TEYL two-day conference every two years.

This conference started in 2008, and it has attracted a great number of teachers from all parts of the country. So far, approximately 250 teachers of English have been trained in University of Kragujevac in Jagodina, Serbia. Both programs have been granted full accreditation by the Ministry of Education and Science of Serbia to serve as professional development programs for teachers of English. The institution is well equipped with modern technological teaching devices and premises. The institution is dedicated to pre-service and in-service primary-school teacher training in all subjects of the primary curriculum, as well as in English.

**Learner Analysis**
This program will consist of two different phases and two different groups of trainees. The first group of participants will be comprised of approximately fifteen teacher trainers who will learn how to conduct training for primary schoolteachers in Serbia, and the second group comprises of primary schoolteachers
throughout the country trained by the first group. The project will thus ensure training of about 100-200 primary schoolteachers of English in Serbia in the academic year 2013/2014.

The first group of teacher trainers consist of approximately 15 experienced teacher trainers, all of whom are accredited by the by the Ministry of Education and Science of Serbia, or hold other teacher training certificates. These teacher trainers will be recruited and trained in order to carry out the training of primary school teachers throughout the country. There are 23 districts with about 3,500 state primary schools and 650,000 school children in Serbia. The trained teacher trainers will work in pairs to conduct approximately 10 trainings, depending on the number of trainers trained, of teachers in host schools in different districts in the country, aiming to reach as many primary teachers as possible. This will insure the multiplier effect of the project.

The second group comprises of primary school teachers of English, both novice and experienced ones. Most of them have completed undergraduate studies and hold degrees in English language and literature. A very small number of teachers are classroom teachers proficient in English (B2/C1 CEF level) and have been exposed to EFL methodology training. Because the undergraduate Program to complete a Bachelor’s degree in EFL education does not provide comprehensive TEYL methodology courses, these teachers need considerable training in the field. Based on observation along a five-year period, it is important to mention that the educational scenario in Jagodina has shown that EFL teachers of young learners lack information related to characteristics of young learners and their language learning abilities and preferences.

**Content Analysis**

The content of the project *Primary School Teacher Training in Theme-Based Instruction* is based on the final project task of the *E-Teacher Scholarship Program Teaching English to Young Learners* provided by the *U.S. Department of State Office of English Language Programs* and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) as well as the content from the workshops attended at UMBC in the 2012 E-Teacher Professional Development Workshops.

The program’s syllabus will be organized in 12 topics grouped in four sessions:

1. **Session one** will cover three main topics regarding *Theme-Based Instruction for Young Learners*: theme-based instruction, the rationale for using theme-based instruction, and the characteristics of young learners.
2. **Session two** will cover four topics regarding *Thematic Unit Planning*: thematic planning, characteristics of thematic units, steps in planning a thematic unit, activities in theme-based instruction, and using materials in theme-based instruction.
3. **Session three** will cover two main topics regarding *Storytelling in Theme-Based Instruction*: critical thinking and classroom interactions in thematic teaching, and stories in theme-based instruction.
4. **Session four** will cover two main topics regarding *Creating Thematic Units*: assessment in theme-based instruction and designing thematic units.

The methodology of training both teacher trainers and in-service teachers will be communicative, task-based and experiential. The trainers and primary-school teachers who will be trained are expected to know the basic principles of TEYL and TEFL. The materials will include authentic theoretical materials, handouts with practice tasks and activities, video materials, audio materials, children’s books, and online materials. All sessions will last 90 minutes.

**Delivery Analysis**

The project will be delivered in two phases:

1. For the teacher trainer, there will be one-day seminar/workshop. The workshop will last 8 hours. Time will be sequentially organized into four 90-minute training sessions. Both the teacher trainers and schoolteachers will receive the same content. The seminar will be conducted on the second Saturday of September 2013, at the University of
Kragujevac in Jagodina, Serbia— in the Department of Education in Jagodina. About approximately 15 teacher trainers will be trained to conduct professional development workshops within the project guidelines throughout Serbia. The training will be conducted during the academic year 2013/2014. It would depend on obtaining financial support of a sponsor to continue subsequent training. The materials for this training program will be supplemented with the materials obtained virtually from the TEYL E-Teacher Scholarship Program and from the content of the workshops obtained from the workshops attended from the 2012 E-teacher Professional Development Workshops 2012. This Summer Professional Development Workshop was held at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA.

2. For the primary school teachers, there will be a one-day seminar/workshop. The workshop will last 8 hours, and it will consist of four 90-minute training sessions. Even though the schoolteachers will be receiving the same content as the teacher trainers, they will also be given models of hands-on materials activities to be used in their respective contexts. The one-day seminar will be followed by a theme-based project to be completed by each participant within a week and posted on common Internet space (Facebook, wiki, or blog) for all members to read. This will be a prerequisite for getting the certificate. Moreover, these lesson plans and materials will be available to other participants to apply and adapt for their students.

The training will be held in the Department of Education in Jagodina. It will be offered four times in the course of the academic year 2013/2014. The dates are as follows:
- November 9, 2013 and November 23, 2013
- February 17, 2014 and February 24, 2014
- March 24, 2014 and April 21, 2014
- June 9, 2014 and June 16, 2014

**Project Plan**

The program will be submitted to the Ministry of Education and Science of Serbia for accreditation by the end of December 2012. Accreditation will be issued by June 2013 and the program will thus be accredited for the academic year 2013/2014 (September 2013 – September 2014). It will also be submitted to the University Board for acceptance in spring 2013.

1. The *Training for Trainers* workshop will be conducted as one-day seminar/workshop on September 14, 2013. It will be conducted at the University of Kragujevac in the Department of Education in Jagodina, Serbia. The workshop will be conducted by an E-teacher scholar.

2. The *Teacher Training* will be conducted throughout the academic year 2013/2014 as a one-day seminar/workshop. The teachers will receive 16 hours of professional development credit (8 hours of training + 8 hours of individual work on creating a thematic unit) awarded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Serbia. It will be conducted in two sites: University of Kragujevac in the Department of Education in Jagodina, Serbia and in other school districts in Serbia.

3. The training will be delivered in four periods during the academic year 2013-2014:
   - November 9, 2013 and November 23, 2013
   - February 17, 2014 and February 24, 2014
   - March 24, 2014 and April 21, 2014

Approximately 20 primary schoolteachers will attend the workshop. The teacher trainers will co-train in pairs. The training will be held in host schools throughout Serbia. There will be approximately 10 seminars/workshops in 5-10 different schools for 15-20 primary teachers of English. The project will result in training approximately 200 primary school teachers in Serbia throughout the 2013-2014 academic year.
**Design**

Young learners learn a language effectively if it is presented in a meaningful context. Theme-based teaching allows teachers to create contexts that bring English alive, actively engage the children and foster the use of integrated skills. Interesting topics will be presented through fun activities such as stories and songs or chants, all of which will enhance children’s motivation and foster the use of English not only for purposeful communication but also to encourage their deeper linguistic and academic development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning/Training Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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</table>
| By the end of Session 1 participants should be able to explain what theme-based instruction is and identify five benefits of applying theme-based instruction in teaching English to young learners and three characteristics of young learners. | Theme-Based Instruction for Young Learners:  
• theme-based instruction  
• rationale for using theme-based instruction  
• characteristics of young learners                                                                 | Mini lectures on characteristics of young learners and theme-based teaching  
• Think-pair-share activity  
• “Power Speaking”  
Experiential activities demonstrating the use of contextualized content:  
• A sample unit (trees)                                                                 | Individual poster presentations titled Characteristics of Young Learners and Five Benefits of Theme-Based Instruction. |
| By the end of Session 2 participants should be able to find themes, describe five steps of planning a thematic unit, use six activities and choose/create materials that are appropriate for young learners. | Thematic Planning:  
• thematic planning  
• characteristics of thematic units  
• steps in planning a thematic unit  
• activities and materials in theme-based instruction                                                                 | Experiential activities demonstrating the steps in planning a thematic unit:  
• sample unit: Vegetables  
• supplementing the unit with visuals and realia  
• activities for developing all four skills                                                                 | Group demonstration of steps in creating a thematic lesson on a topic chosen by participants. |
### Objective

By the end of Session 3 participants should be able to successfully build lessons around stories and tell one children’s story by using all of the techniques for storytelling and at least 3 pre-storytelling activities, during storytelling activities and post-storytelling activities demonstrated by the trainer.

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of Session 3 participants should be able to successfully build lessons around stories and tell one children’s story by using all of the techniques for storytelling and at least 3 pre-storytelling activities, during storytelling activities and post-storytelling activities demonstrated by the trainer.</td>
<td>Storytelling in Theme-Based Instruction: Critical thinking and using stories in theme-based instruction • critical thinking and classroom interactions in thematic teaching • using stories in theme-based instruction • techniques for storytelling • pre-storytelling, during storytelling and post-storytelling activities</td>
<td>Mini lecture on the rationale for using stories in teaching English to YL. Demonstration of storytelling using the story I will not ever NEVER eat a tomato (by Lauren Child) • techniques for storytelling • pre-storytelling activities • during storytelling activities • post-storytelling activities</td>
<td>Group demonstration of using all of the suggested techniques for storytelling and at least 3 pre-storytelling activities, during storytelling activities and post-storytelling activities for one authentic children’s storybook.</td>
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By the end of Session 4 participants should be able to apply successfully alternative (integrated) assessment practices and create a thematic unit of their own.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of Session 4 participants should be able to apply successfully alternative (integrated) assessment practices and create a thematic unit of their own.</td>
<td>Creating Thematic Units • assessment in theme-based instruction • creating a thematic unit.</td>
<td>Experiential activities demonstrating the use of integrated assessment in theme-based teaching. Sample thematic lesson plan based on the story The Kapok Tree Experiential activities demonstrating the development of vocabulary, language structures and skills in theme-based teaching</td>
<td>Individual creation of a thematic unit on a chosen topic, posted online (follow-up).</td>
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### Rationale for Sequence

The program will be conducted in four 90-minute sessions as designed in the chart above. Session one will give basic information on teaching English to young learners and their characteristics. Then, it will introduce the concept of theme-based teaching and explore its benefits. This will create the foundation for studying the process of thematic planning and choosing activities and materials in Session 2. Session 3 will introduce development of critical thinking in young learners through storytelling and theme-based teaching, and further develop participants’ skills for appropriate choice of activities. The last session will focus on alternative assessment techniques and give the wrapping up of the process of planning thematic units. The follow-up task of creating a thematic unit on a chosen topic will be used to evaluate an overall effectiveness of the program.
### Development
(Training plan based on Gagne’s Nine Events of Instruction)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gain attention</td>
<td>Pair work (PW), 10 min&lt;br&gt;Power Speaking: Trainees are asked to share their experiences with theme-based instruction in pairs, by responding to the following questions: What kind of content do you use in your English classes? What is one theme you have used that both you and your students enjoyed?</td>
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<td>2. Inform learners of objectives</td>
<td>Class work (CW) 2 min&lt;br&gt;Trainees are told that the session will prepare them for planning thematic units by applying five steps that will be exemplified.</td>
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<td>3. Stimulate recall of prior learning</td>
<td>Individual work (IW) or pair work (PW), 8 min&lt;br&gt;Trainees are asked to fill in a KWL chart related to the topic of theme-based teaching; then they share in pairs what they already know about theme-based teaching, and what they want to know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Present the content</td>
<td>Group work (GW) 20 min&lt;br&gt;In groups of five trainees will study different steps for thematic planning: each trainee will describe one step and will attempt to answer the questions related to the topic <em>Vegetables.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Guide learning</td>
<td>Group work (GW) 10 min&lt;br&gt;Groups prepare posters to illustrate the five steps for planning thematic units.</td>
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<td>6. Elicit performance (practice)</td>
<td>Group work (GW) 15 min&lt;br&gt;Using the information in the posters and the new handout with a list and descriptions of activities, trainees design a new thematic plan on the topic they choose in groups; then the groups present their thematic plans.</td>
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<td>7. Provide feedback</td>
<td>Individual work (IW) 5 min&lt;br&gt;Trainees use the KWL chart and fill in the “learned” section for self-evaluation; then the whole group summarizes what they have learned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Assess performance</td>
<td>Pair work (PW) 15 min&lt;br&gt;Trainees are given a specific topic in pairs and links to websites with materials and activities – their task is to find appropriate materials and activities for teaching the topic: Thematic Unit Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Enhance retention and transfer</td>
<td>Group work (GW), 5 min&lt;br&gt;Trainees are instructed to choose any topic and make a list of all material sources and type of activities appropriate for teaching the topic to young learners.</td>
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### Implementation Checklist:

**Items**
- Computer & projector
- Flipchart & paper
- Flipchart markers & whiteboard markers
- Pins and/or blue tack
- Refreshments, paper plates & plastic glasses
- Handouts
- Feedback forms
- List of participants

**Tasks**
- Sending information letters/emails to schools/teachers/trainers
- Setting the seminar date with trainers & host school
- Making list of participants
- Putting a poster with seminar information in the institution or host school
- Copying handouts & feedback forms
- Arranging for the refreshments to be delivered to the venue
- Arranging desks and chairs for small-group work

**Evaluation**

A Program Board represented by the University of Kragujevac in Jagodina, Serbia, the Department of Education in Jagodina, the Ministry of Education and Science of Serbia, and the sponsor(s) from the US Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia will conduct a thorough evaluation that will include the following components:

Formative evaluation by teacher trainers (at the end of each training period):

- Questionnaires for assessing participants’ engagement, task completion, and final project completion.

Summative assessment of content:

- Questionnaires for assessing participants' satisfaction with the program.
- Questionnaires for participants' self-evaluation of learning as result of the program.
- Post-course e-mail interviews for assessing effects of the program on the institution in which the participants work.