E-Teacher Scholarship Program
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Xiaoqing Yang
China

E-Teacher Professional Development Workshop
University of Maryland, Baltimore County and
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An IELTS Course Development Project for EFL Teachers in China
Xiaoqing Yang, China

This project proposal aims to train ten English as a Foreign Language Teaching (EFL) teachers immersed in a test-oriented EFL teaching context. The project will aim to improve their overall delivery of instruction and their overall approach to course development by adapting Westerfield’s five-step model. The five workshops of the project will be presented in five stages: needs assessment, syllabus design, material selection and adaptation, instructional design, and EFL assessment. The main sources that will be used will be taken from the course content from the E-Teacher Professional Development Workshops 2012 at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) and from the E-Teacher EFL Assessment course facilitated by UMBC. The course content will be an adaptation of such courses. It will be delivered using task-based techniques and cooperative learning through the whole process under a top-down approach. If successfully conducted, this project could go deeper into any step of the course development model, and hopefully be applied to other language training centers in the future.

Hosts: Center for Chinese and English Language Learning (CCELL), China Three Gorges University

Participants: 10 in-service EFL teachers from CCELL

Program: Five three-hour face-to-face workshops in course development: needs assessment, syllabus design, material selection and adaptation, and instructional design as well as assessment workshops for EFL teachers from the Center of Chinese and English Language Learning

Schedule: March 2 – March 30, 2013

Goals: The goals of this training program are as follows:

• To introduce participants to the five-step “Best Practices in Course Development” model and to demonstrate an overall approach to course development;
• To conduct needs assessment in course development;
• To create a general syllabus design based on the needs assessment and objectives to achieve;
• To select and develop appropriate teaching materials and activities;
• To develop instruction that keeps learners engaged and motivated; and
• To conduct effective classroom assessment and to create an agreed upon assessment policy for the course.
**Problem Identification**

The need of test preparation to pass standardized tests is seen as urgent. For this reason, a great number of teachers have become interested in test preparation and have opted to prepare students to pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which tests English proficiency across the globe. On one hand, this surge could be a positive tendency if compared to the national English tests in China. In fact, the IELTS is a highly standardized and well-developed test system that will most likely help administrators and teachers set clear goals extensively in areas such as delivery of instruction, selection of better teaching materials, and teaching and evaluating more effectively. On the other hand, the test-oriented language teaching is also dangerous and has brought certain problems. A most commonly shared problem in the local context is that teachers are often under a lot of pressure of teaching “to the test”, i.e., to enable learners to pass the test without truly considering language development. Finally, their inability to develop a systematic approach will get them trapped in monotonous circles of mock testing, scoring, feeding vocabulary and skills, and mock testing again. The aim of this proposal is to enable teachers to improve their teaching practices by developing a course plan that contains a holistic and systematic approach to test preparation and language development.

Despite IELTS’s soaring popularity in China, the standardized test is still in the minority of the English language test market, especially in mid-sized cities like Yichang. Since there is no existing curriculum for these IELTS-oriented English courses, teachers are teaching eclectically with different syllabi and disjointed materials and methods. In this situation, in order to help develop a complete system of IELTS English course, it is advisable to start from the analysis of the test and the course needs in both theory and practice.

The proposed project will offer workshops to be held in the Center of Chinese and English Language Learning (CCELL), China at Three Gorges University. The installations will be fully equipped with WIFI, contain a computer, an overhead projector, and a whiteboard. The aim is to emulate this initiative in many other Institutions or training centers across China.

The content and deliverables to be used as teaching resources will be adapted from the *U.S. Department of State E-Teacher Scholarship Program, 2012*, Professional Development Workshop topics in the following areas: ESP, Instructional Design, Methods, Comprehensible Input through the Medium of English, and EFL Assessment.

**Learner Analysis**

The targeted participants will be ten IELTS English teachers from the Center of Chinese and English Language Learning who have been newly hired to teach for Three Gorges University. The trainer will conduct interviews, establish the profile of the participants, and conduct class observations before the actual training begins. Once the trainer concludes with the analysis, 10 participants will be selected to participate in the training course. The trainer will be responsible for the logistics and management of the project and will oversee the needs of the learner.

**Content Analysis**

In this project, an ESP course development model will be adopted to help with the IELTS course design and development, aiming to cover the most important issues that are relevant to the process. The training will be divided into the following five stages:

1. “Best Practices” model and needs assessment of a test-oriented course;
2. Course syllabus design and assessment;
3. Material selection and adaptation;
4. Instructional design and teaching methods; and
5. Classroom assessment.
The participants in this project are expected to have the experience of taking the IELTS test with an overall score of no less than 7. In addition, they also need basic computer skills in word processing, email communication, online communication tools (QQ Groups) and submitting assignments online.

A set of well-developed adapted teaching materials will be accessible from the U.S. Department of State E-Teacher Scholarship Program 2012. In addition, the resource center of CCELL will also be able to provide some related materials, like the Chinese translation of some assessment and methodology books.

After receiving the confirmation from the participants and having received the pre-training survey of the program, as well as completed all the specifications and details needed before the actual training takes place, the workshop will be conducted through a top-down and learner-centered approach. In addition, task-based techniques as well as cooperative learning practices will be frequently applied in the whole process.

**Delivery Analysis**
The project will be delivered via a holistic and systematic approach. In the first stage of the training, a five-step model of course development will be offered to achieve overall understanding of the system and process, needs assessment, syllabus design, material selection and adaptation, instructional design, and assessment. In the second stage, separate workshops will be arranged for each of the above five stages. Academic information will be presented and detailed analysis will be guided according to the local context.

Generally, most materials will be selected and adapted from the U.S. Department of State E-Teacher Scholarship Program, 2012; at the same time, more materials will be distributed to enable participants to grasp better understanding of each part of the content and practice more effectively. In addition, cooperative learning will also be used during the training. By the end of the workshop, all participants will be required to create a course syllabus and an assessment policy as part of the final assessment and product.

For each workshop of the project, the main content of training will be presented in the form of slides via the projection of a PowerPoint presentation. Then, reading materials will be printed out or sent electronically depending on the specific purpose. All the course participants will be required to read assigned materials before the workshop and participate in tasks to consolidate and expand on the content of the readings cooperatively. At the end of each workshop, participants should complete weekly reflective essays about the workshop, reading assignments, theoretical concepts and their practical applications.

**Project Plan**
The target dates for the workshops and the topics will be arranged on a weekly basis, starting from March 2, 2013 through March 30, 2013. The complete schedule and dates are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2, 2013</td>
<td>The “Best Practices” model &amp; needs assessment of a test-oriented course</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 9, 2013</td>
<td>Course syllabus design</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16, 2013</td>
<td>Material selection and adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23, 2013</td>
<td>Instructional design &amp; teaching methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 30, 2013</td>
<td>Classroom assessment and assessment policy design</td>
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**Design**
_An IELTS Course Development Project for EFL Teachers in China: Five Session Workshop_
Any English language course should contain a holistic system based on its local context. The purpose of this project is to introduce participants to the theory and practice of course development. Participants will be engaged in a top-down approach of course analysis, design and development; they will be given tasks for cooperative learning and facilitating better practice, like syllabus design and assessment policy development; they will also discuss effective approaches in a test-oriented language classroom and share experience in material adaptation and activities creation for more comprehensible input of language. By the end of the program, participants will be confident and ready to teach with the helpful outcome from the
workshop: a course syllabus and assessment policy under the local context.
- Week 1: The “Best Practices” model of course development & needs assessment
- Week 2: Course Syllabus Design
- Week 3: Material Selection and Adaptation
- Week 4: Instructional Design and Methods
- Week 5: Assessment & Assessment Policy

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Learning/Training Activity</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. By the end of the 1st workshop, participants should be able to • recognize the five-step model of “Best Practices” in course development; • conduct needs assessment by using the needs assessment template; • produce the objectives of specific courses according to sub-skills.</td>
<td>The “Best Practices” model &amp; needs assessment • Best Practices in ESP. (K. Westerfield, 2010) • Needs assessment template study and needs assessment for an IELTS course • The analysis of IELTS public documents and sample tests for aim setting • Five basic principles of assessment</td>
<td>• Experiential activity on taking tests: likes and dislikes &amp; why • Brainstorming: possible procedures or factors of a course development • Group discussion: How is the relationship between teaching, learning, and assessment reflected from your IELTS course? • Task: identify objectives of IELTS Course according to sub-skills (as assignment after group work)</td>
<td>Classroom group presentation: needs assessment Reflective writing: IS THE IELTS TEST MEANINGFUL?</td>
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<td>2. By the end of the 2nd workshop, participants should be able to develop a feasible syllabus design.</td>
<td>Course Syllabus Design: • Different syllabus types: grammatical syllabuses, notional-functional, content-based, task-based • integrated samples of different syllabuses</td>
<td>• Group presentation of assignment: goals and objectives of the IELTS courses • Mini-lecture on different syllabus types with samples • Group task: design a syllabus template for different sub-skill courses</td>
<td>Online writing assignment: syllabus design for IELTS sub-skill courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. By the end of the 3rd workshop, participants should be able to select appropriate materials for the course and create classroom activities.</td>
<td>Material Selection and Adaptation: • Important considerations for materials • Locate resources • Select resources • Clarify the purpose • Create activities</td>
<td>• Brain-storming: important considerations for materials • Group task: creating activities from supplemental materials • Brain-storming: resources for IELTS English courses</td>
<td>Online assignment: material critique for an IELTS Reading course material (with activities designs attached)</td>
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### Objective

4. By the end of the 4th week, participants should be able to
- recognize nine basic events of instruction;
- demonstrate a formalized lesson plan; and
- employ effective methods to make the teaching more effective.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Design &amp; Methods:</td>
<td>• Gagne’s nine events of instruction&lt;br&gt;• Lesson plan template development&lt;br&gt;• Overview of EFL Methods</td>
<td>• Game playing of Jigsaw to facilitate the understanding of the nine events of instruction;&lt;br&gt;Mini-lecture on lesson planning;&lt;br&gt;Group task: a lesson plan template; and&lt;br&gt;Mini-lecture: Methods.</td>
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5. By the end of the 5th workshop, participants should be able to
- recognize basic principles and techniques of effective assessment;
- recognize effective techniques in assessing grammar and vocabulary;
- apply effective techniques in assessing skills; and
- develop a feasible assessment policy for the course.

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<tr>
<td>Assessment &amp; Assessment Policy Development:</td>
<td>• Basic principles and techniques of effective assessment&lt;br&gt;• Assessing grammar and vocabulary&lt;br&gt;• Assessing receptive and productive skills&lt;br&gt;• Language policy</td>
<td>• Experiential activity: sharing experience in IELTS speaking and writing tests – what matters the most?&lt;br&gt;Group task: Critique on sample classroom assessment and further development</td>
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### Rationale for Sequence

This particular sequence of workshops is considered effective because
- It takes a top-down approach, which is suitable for adult learners;
- It gives participants opportunities to review and practice what they have learned as the training proceeds; and
- It relates the content with teaching practice and lays the groundwork for future training.
### Development
(Training plan based on Gagne’s Nine Events of Instruction)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Gain attention</td>
<td>A video clip on the theme of “Lost in Information” to attract participants’ attention to review the former “material selection” session and introduce the coming topic of “creating activities from supplemental materials.”</td>
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<td>2. Inform learners of objectives</td>
<td>Upon completing the lesson, participants should be able to create effective activities from supplemental materials.</td>
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<td>3. Stimulate recall of prior learning</td>
<td>Each activity of supplemental materials will have a purpose of going back to the objectives gained from the needs assessment, so participants will recycle material on needs assessment. Interactive dialogue will be stimulated. Participants should reach an agreement on the needs or objective of a specific supplement material through group discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Present the content</td>
<td>Printed materials and a template for each activity will be given to the participants. The content will be presented explicitly through PowerPoint: supplementary material will be clear and presented in a graphic organizer.</td>
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<td>5. Guide learning</td>
<td>A sample critique of a piece of reading material with activities will be used to guide learning, and the main approach and methods will be recalled through analysis.</td>
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<td>6. Elicit performance (practice)</td>
<td>Participants will work in groups to design a series of activities based on the same material they were given earlier, and the instructor walk around to offer help.</td>
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<td>7. Provide feedback</td>
<td>A representative from each group will go to another group to share their activities, and feedback will be firstly gained from peers. A checklist would also be offered by the instructor for more a systematic feedback. If time permitted, one group could present their design in the workshop, and feedback will be provided to both peers and instructor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Assess performance</td>
<td>After the improvement of the task, group leaders will post their product online and the instructor will administer a final evaluation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Enhance retention and transfer</td>
<td>Another online assignment of material activity design will be given. Participants will finish their work independently and hand it in as an assignment.</td>
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### Implementation Checklist:

**Items**
- Ten notepads
- Stationery
- A whiteboard & markers
- A notice board and pins to hang participants’ work
- A printer
- A scanner
- A photograph machine
- A-4 paper
- Flipcharts
- A series of books concerning course design
- IELTS Preparation books
- Refreshments

**Tasks**
- The purchase of books on course development
- The purchase of IELTS preparation books
- Arrangements for classroom decoration and cleaning
- Checking classroom equipment (electricity, air conditioning, computer, projector and Internet)
- Printing and copying handouts

**Evaluation**

**Formative Evaluation**
- For each workshop, task-based activities will be designed and given to participants to demonstrate their understanding of the content.
- Checklists will be designed for participants to do self-evaluation and peer evaluation during and after the workshop.
- Instructor observation will be conducted for participants individually by checklist.
- Discussion participation.
- The online assignment for each workshop.
- Presentation of products.

**Summative Evaluation**
- Outcomes in form of syllabus design and assessment policy design.
- End of project evaluation by questionnaire.
- Follow-up observation in classroom teaching after project.