

Summer English Program 2005 Handbook

Table of Contents

Section 1: General Introduction to the Program

Introduction To The Summer English Program (SEP).....	2
Guidelines: Summer English Program.....	3
General and Emergency Information.....	4
The Summer English Program and Christian Service	6
Chinese Middle Schools and English: Some Basic Facts.....	10

Section 2: The SEP Teaching Program

Goals And Underlying Principles	12
Overview Of Courses.....	14
Suggested Daily Schedules.....	16
Suggested Course Schedule Plans	17
The Daily Life Course	19
The People And Relationships Course	21
The Learning And Teaching Course.....	22
The My Country And Yours Course.....	26
The English Corner/Activities Period.....	28
Placement Interviews.....	30
Tips on Teaching Oral Skills - Especially To Lower Level Classes	34
Five Do's And Don't's In A Conversation Class: Basics For Those New To ESL.....	36
Testing And Grading.....	38

Section 3: Before You Depart

Things To Bring For Teaching	42
Books To Consider Reading Before You Come.....	44
Packing List	45
Suggestions From One Who Has Been There	47
Little Tips For A Happy Life In China.....	51

Section 4: Extra Background Information

Frequently Asked Questions About the Protestant Church in China.....	52
Teacher Lin.....	58
Lessons From Junior/Senior English for China.....	60

Introduction to the Amity Summer English Program (SEP)

The Amity Foundation is an independent Chinese voluntary organization which was created in 1985 on the initiative of Chinese Christians to promote health, education, social services, and rural development in China. Its three goals are: 1) to contribute to China's social development and openness to the outside world; 2) to make Christian involvement and participation in society more widely known to the Chinese people; and 3) to serve as a channel for people-to-people contact and the ecumenical sharing of resources.

Amity sponsors the Summer English Program (SEP) to provide Chinese middle school English teachers with an opportunity to improve their English speaking and listening skills.* Many Chinese English teachers, especially from rural areas, have never had an opportunity to speak English with a foreigner, and many have never had much opportunity to practice English speaking and listening skills. Their English speaking and listening skills thus lag far behind their reading ability and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. China has introduced a new series of English language textbooks which place greater stress on speaking and listening skills, and many Chinese English teachers are ill-prepared to deal with this new curriculum. The SEP is thus an effort to equip Chinese English teachers for the new demands of China's English language curriculum.

One primary emphasis of the SEP is on giving participants an opportunity to practice their speaking and listening skills with foreign teachers and with each other. Another emphasis is on culture. By learning more about Western culture, participants enhance their teaching. Also, as they talk with you about Chinese culture, they have a valuable chance to practice their speaking by talking about a topic that is genuinely interesting -- and a topic about which you can learn a great deal. A third emphasis of the SEP is on exposing participants to new methods for English teaching. Western teaching approaches tend to be more communicative, learner-centered, and active than the approaches to which Chinese teachers are accustomed. While your methods may not be entirely appropriate for Chinese classrooms, exposure to new teaching ideas will be stimulating and useful for participants in the program.

All of this is explained in more detail elsewhere in the Handbook, so please read on. For the moment just let us thank you for your willingness to volunteer your time this summer.

Welcome to the Amity Summer English Program!

** Note: The recent trend toward starting English education at the primary level has prompted primary school teachers to express an interest in the SEP as well. Although some of Amity's Summer English Programs may include a limited number of primary school teachers, our focus remains on Chinese English teachers at the junior and senior middle school levels.)*

Guidelines: Summer English Program

Amity staff

In order to develop a common understanding of relationships and responsibilities for foreign teachers serving in Chinese institutions of higher learning, the Amity Foundation has drawn up the following guidelines:

Respect for Chinese law: Teachers are expected to respect the laws and decrees of the People's Republic of China, and to observe the regulations of the schools to which they are assigned.

Respect for Chinese custom: Teachers are expected to respect Chinese customs, especially with regard to sexual relationships. In this light, casual "affairs," pre- or extra-marital sex and homosexual relationships are not acceptable.

Respect for work assignment: Teachers are expected to carry out the teaching assignment agreed upon between themselves and their respective institutions. Classes should not be rearranged to coincide with teachers' weekend travel plans.

Respect for Chinese religious policy: Christian teachers are welcome to attend worship services and meet with Chinese Christians. The Chinese church, being part of the Church universal, is self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. While teachers are free to speak of religious beliefs in their conversations with students and colleagues in China, they should not engage in any activity of a proselytizing nature. (For more discussion of this issue, see "The Summer English Program and Christian Service".)

General and Emergency Information

Nanjing Staff

General: The Amity Foundation will hold the Summer English Training Program in a variety of locations throughout China during the summer of 2005. This Program will be geared towards Chinese middle school teachers and will offer oral English training for them. Interested sending agencies are encouraged to recruit volunteer teachers for this program. Individual volunteers not affiliated with a sending agency may pursue their interest in participating in this program by contacting the Amity Foundation directly. The contact information is as follows:

Ruhong Liu, Director, Education Division, The Amity Foundation
71 Hankou Road
Nanjing, Jiangsu 210008
Email: liuruhong@amityfoundation.org.cn
Tel: 86-25-8332-4607. Fax: 86-25-8663-1701. (86 = China code; 25 = Nanjing area code)

Time: The 2005 program will run from July 3 - August 3, 2005. The timetable is as follows:

July 3 (Sun.)	Registration for Orientation
July 4-6 (Mon.- Wed.)	Nanjing Orientation Conference
July 7 (Thur.)	Departure for Teaching Sites
July 9 (Sat.)	Opening Ceremony (at teaching site)
Jul 30 (Sat.)	Closing Ceremony (at teaching site)
Aug. 1-2 (Mon.-Tue.)	Debriefing (in Beijing)
Aug. 3 (Wed.)	Depart for Home

Costs: Sending agencies or individual volunteers are responsible for arranging and paying for transportation from the volunteers' home countries to Nanjing before the program. They are also responsible for arrangements and cost of transportation from Beijing back to their home countries after the program has finished.

In addition, each volunteer is responsible for payment of a block grant of US\$ 1000 to cover orientation costs, domestic travel, and other program costs. The payment should be forwarded to Amity before the Nanjing Orientation, and a breakdown of the block grant is offered below (in US dollars):

1	Nanjing Orientation	\$180
2	Travel (Nanjing – teaching sites – Beijing)	\$250
3	Subsidy for Chinese host schools (Covers volunteers' room & board)	\$350
4	Teaching Materials	\$30
5	Debriefing in Beijing	\$120
6	Administration Fees	\$70

Application Deadlines: For individual applicants, Amity recommends a final deadline of April 1, 2005. Team groupings should be finalized by sending agencies and submitted by to Amity by April 15, 2005. For those applying through a sending organization, please check with your organization to see if there are other relevant dates to keep in mind.

The “Amity Application Form” and the “Health Questionnaire” are both important and necessary elements of the application process for the Summer English Program. Both of these documents are available on the Amity website: www.amityfoundation.org

Please download these documents and then view the link for your sending organization for further details about how to apply. If you are not affiliated with a denomination or sending agency and you wish to Amity directly, please send the completed forms to Ruhong Liu, Director, Education Division using the contact information given above.

Recruitment and Team Formation: Sending organizations are responsible for the screening, selection and preparation of the teachers they send. In most cases, volunteers should be grouped as teams of four with one of the team members serving as the team leader.

Amity will be responsible for grouping independent applicants and will select a team leader for these groups. Independent teachers will be informed about their acceptance to the program within one week of submitting their application, and they will be notified of their team assignment by April 15, 2005

Team Leader Responsibilities:

- Contact the related team members and coordinate planning before coming to China.
- Serve as Liaison with the school and facilitate teamwork during the program.
- Supervise the teaching plan and daily issues with the team.
- Ideally, the team leader should possess EFL training and have experience teaching in China or in another developing country.
-

Team Members Requirements:

- Observe the laws and ordinances of the Chinese government and refrain from any activity of a proselytizing nature.
- Have a college degree. If most members of a team are experienced teachers, the team can include one person that does not have a degree to act as a teaching assistant. This person is expected to teach conversation classes.
- Possess good health and willingness to work in tough conditions. The summer in China can be very demanding and the temperature is often between 36 – 40 Centigrade (95-105 F). The classrooms are not air-conditioned, and the teachers are expected to teach 4-6 hours a day. Sending agencies should be aware of the physical capability of their applicants during the recruitment process. Attached is the Physical Self-assessment Form that is designed for applicants to go through as they assess their own health ability.
- Ensure that the trip to China is properly covered by medical insurance, either personal or through their sponsoring group.
- Meet the age limit requirement of 68 for new teachers and 73 for those who have taught with the Amity Summer Program before.

As most of the schools in China are not able to accommodate teachers accompanied by children, volunteer teachers should not plan to bring children when they come.

Communication: Amity makes every effort to obtain contact information for schools prior to the volunteers’ arrival in China. Amity will forward this information to volunteers as it becomes available.

Changes in contact information often do occur, however, and so upon arrival at the teaching site, volunteers are asked to notify both the Amity Foundation and their personal contacts to provide or confirm the correct telephone number and address at their schools.

Amity will forward the teachers' mail sent to China in care of the Amity Foundation, but they will inevitably be delayed and may not reach teachers before the end of the program.

Visa: Amity will take care of securing a "Letter of Invitation" from the related host schools for each volunteer. This document will guarantee that teachers will be able to arrange a 60-day Visitor's Visa ("F" visa) that will be legal for the teacher to stay the duration of the summer program. (Note: This is different from a Tourist Visa.)

Each teacher or sending agency is responsible for using the official letters of invitation provided by Amity to apply for the appropriate visa through the Chinese embassy or consulate in their home country. Detailed instructions for SEP visa application are available from Amity upon request.

Debriefing: At the end of the program, volunteers will gather in Beijing to for a day and a half debriefing. This will allow Amity to hear how the program went in each location and to evaluate the program. It will also be a time for teachers to see friends from other teaching sites, share experiences and get a broader perspective on the SEP experience.

Emergency Contacts:

In case of emergency, please contact one of the following:

- **Director of Education Division, Ms. Liu Ruhong.** Mailing Address: Amity Foundation, 71 Hankou Road, Nanjing, Jiangsu 210008, People's Republic of China. Telephone: (86-25) 8332-4607; 8320-6445. Fax: (86-25) 8663-1701. E-mail: <liuruhong@amityfoundation.org.cn>, <liuruhong@hotmail.com>.
- **Jessie (SEP China Liaison)** can be contacted at the same mailing address, phone and fax as above or by e-mail at <fuyanfei@amityfoundation.org.cn>.
- **Kim Strong (SEP Overseas Liaison)** Mailing address: 13th Floor Ultragrace Commercial Building, # 5 Jordan Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Telephone (852) 2723-8011. Fax: (852) 2366-2769. E-mail: <kimstrong@pacific.net.hk>.

The Summer English Program and Christian Service

Don Snow

A question which you may well ask yourself, and which will certainly be asked of you by others, is: In what ways is English teaching in China Christian service? There are many possible answers to this question, but here we would like to suggest four answers which reflect major goals of the Amity Foundation.

I. Goals of Amity

Service: The first goal of the Amity Foundation is to contribute to China's social development, particularly the development of relatively disadvantaged sectors of China's population. China's rush for development has resulted in an increasing gap between wealthy areas and poorer areas, a gap which is reflected in access to educational opportunities. As educational standards rise, students in schools outside the elite "key" school system are at an increasing disadvantage in competition for scarce opportunities for higher education. English plays a decisive role in the examinations which determine which students will or will not have access to higher education, and students from key schools with well-trained English teachers have a great advantage over students in countryside schools where teachers can often hardly speak English at all. Many of the participants in the Summer English Program are teachers from non-key schools who have never before had an opportunity to practice using their English.

Christians are called to respond to the needs of others, especially the disadvantaged, and through the Summer English Program you have a chance to contribute to education in China's poorer areas.

Witness: One of the goals of the Amity Foundation is: "To make Christian involvement and participation in society more widely known to the Chinese people." Service as an Amity Teacher is a good witness to the concern of Christians, Chinese as well as foreign, for the well-being of society at large. Christians are to be light-giving lamps so that people give praise to God in heaven when they see the good God's children do on earth (Mt. 5:16).

A major part of your witness is expressed through your service as a teacher. In a setting where you do not easily get lost in the crowd, the diligence and responsibility with which you carry out your work will be noticed. Your witness and faith are also expressed through the way you live and interact with others. The difficulties of living in another culture can sometimes make it difficult to maintain a positive attitude toward life in China, but preserving a positive outlook is important so that the witness you present to your students, the school administrators, and others you come in contact with in the community is one of patience, kindness, and tolerance. As a foreigner in China, you are inevitably a city on a hill and a lamp on a stand; the challenge is keeping your salt salty.

Another important way to proclaim and live out your faith is through participating in local churches in China. This can be difficult because of language and cultural barriers, as well as more mundane problems like finding a place to sit in a crowded sanctuary. But even if you can't understand all that is happening during a service, just by being present you proclaim your faith, identify with Chinese Christians, and allow Chinese Christians to minister to you.

Reconciliation and Understanding: During the last 150 years, China's relationships with the West have often been difficult. While Chinese people are generally polite and friendly to individual foreigners, they also remember the ways in which China has suffered at the hands

of outside powers, and many still view the outside world with a degree of suspicion and even hostility.

One of the purposes of the Amity Foundation is to contribute to China's openness to the outside world, and working toward reconciliation is part of this call. As an Amity teacher you are a goodwill ambassador, doing a small but important part to build better relations and understanding between the Chinese and the people of your nation. You do this not only through the relationships you build, but also as you teach about your own culture and learn about the culture of China.

Sharing with your Home Community: Service in the Summer English Program allows you a brief but valuable opportunity to see China up close and gain a better understanding of both China and its Christian church. China has a growing and vital church, and there is much that we can learn from it. It is Amity's hope that you will be able to serve as a bridge between China and your home community, sharing what you have seen so that Christians at home can be encouraged by and learn from the experience of the Chinese church, and so that Christians at home can also better serve and pray for China.

II. Some Issues and Guidelines

Christian literature: Amity asks that you not bring Bibles and Christian tracts to China for distribution. This is prohibited by Chinese law, and the planned nature of such activity strongly suggests an evangelistic agenda rather than one focused on teaching. (You may bring a Bible for personal use. You can also purchase a Chinese/English Bible in China for your personal use or to put on a reading table in your classroom if you wish.)

If you desire to make Christian literature more widely available in China, you might contribute toward the printing and distribution of Bibles and other Christian literature in China. The Amity Press, a joint venture between the Amity Foundation and the United Bible Society, publishes Bibles and hymnbooks in Nanjing, and contributions (designated for the printing and distribution of Bibles in China) can be made through the American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, or through Rev. Bao Jiayuan, China Christian Council, 17 Da Jian Yin Street, Nanjing, 210029, China. (There are handling costs for cashing US checks in China, so modest gifts make more impact if sent through ABS.)

Talking about Christianity: As you get to know people in China, you will no doubt have opportunities to talk about many aspects of your life, including your faith. It is permissible in China for you to talk with people about your faith, especially in response to questions. However, by law foreigners are not permitted to engage in evangelistic activities.

What is and is not acceptable? There is no hard and fast rule, but the following rule of thumb may be helpful: If discussion of your faith emerges naturally in conversation, especially if you discuss it in response to questions, nobody should develop a sense that you have a hidden agenda. On the other hand, if you create the impression that you have a product to sell by actively seeking opportunities to talk about Christianity whether your listeners are interested or not, you are over the line.

Some foreign Christians come to China expecting that the police will descend on them the first time they talk about Christianity. This is simply not the case. However, what can and does happen when foreign teachers use the Summer English Program as a cover for hidden agendas is that Amity's integrity is compromised. Schools where this happens find it harder to trust Amity, and authorities are more likely to doubt Amity's honesty and forthrightness. This tarnishes Amity's reputation and witness.

The Evangelism Issue: You will almost certainly encounter people - friends back home or other foreign teachers in China - who assume that any true Christian ministry carried out by foreigners in China must have evangelism as its primary agenda, and who will have questions about Amity's focus on service. Here are a few thoughts which may help you explain why Amity emphasizes service rather than evangelism:

1) History: Christianity came to China through Western missionaries, and these missionaries played a leading role in many Chinese churches up until 1949, so there is still a widespread impression among Chinese that Christianity is a foreign or Western religion, and that becoming Christian is turning one's back on being Chinese. The independence of the Chinese church over the last few decades has done much to rectify this misunderstanding, but the re-entry of foreign evangelists risks the re-affixing of the "foreign" label to Christianity in the minds of many Chinese.

2) Respect: The Chinese church is a member of the world community of churches, and foreign Christians can do more good by respecting it and working with it in partnership, building it up, than they can by ignoring it and carrying out independent agendas.

3) Integrity: Chinese law forbids foreigners coming to China for the purpose of undertaking evangelistic activities, and Amity teachers - like all other foreign Christian teachers - are invited to teach in Chinese schools on the understanding that they will adhere to these regulations. Hidden agendas necessarily raise questions about a teacher's honesty and integrity. In contrast, service that is fully honest and transparent presents a positive witness to school and state authorities as well as to colleagues and students.

4) Need: Foreign Christians should offer help in areas where the Chinese churches need and ask for assistance, one of these being social service. Evangelism is not an area in which the Chinese church is weak; in fact, very few Western churches have recently seen the kind of growth the Chinese church is now experiencing. There is probably more need for foreign Christians to learn from Chinese Christians in this regard than vice versa.

Chinese Middle Schools and English: Some Basic Facts

Don Snow

Compulsory education: The first nine years of education in China are compulsory. In other words, China's policy is that all students should go to primary school (grades 1-6) and junior middle school (7-9). (This is an ideal goal rather than a current reality -- in rural areas children may not have access to a full nine years of schooling, and even in areas where schools are available it is not unusual for children from poor families to complete less than nine years.)

However, only a minority of the best students have the opportunity to study in senior middle school (10-12), and only a small percentage of senior high graduates are allowed to enter university. Competition for academic success and scarce opportunities is thus quite fierce, especially beginning in junior middle school.

Key schools: Some Chinese middle schools are elite schools ("key") schools; usually the #1 Middle School of a county is the key school. (In larger cities there may be more than one key school.) These schools are generally much better than regular schools, and a much higher percentage of their graduates go on to higher levels of education. (The key school system is being dismantled now in China, especially at the junior middle school level. However, schools which used to be key schools are still generally much better than those which were not.)

Required subject: English is a required subject in all junior and senior middle schools in China, and is also required of university students.

Standardized tests: In order to get into a good senior middle school, students must score well on the senior middle school entrance examination. English is an important part of this test, and it is often the English test score which determines which students succeed and which fail. (Scores on other parts of the exam generally don't vary as widely.) Getting into a key middle school is very important for students who hope to go to university because generally only graduates of key senior middle schools have any hope of reaching university. After completion of senior middle school, students who want to advance to university must compete on the college entrance examination, and English again carries much weight in determining success and failure.

Middle school English teachers: The teaching profession has fallen in prestige over the last decade because salary increases have not kept pace with other sectors of Chinese society, so morale among teachers has dropped and some would like to leave the profession. However, there are still many teachers who are very committed to their work.

Teachers' English levels: In general, Chinese English teachers are more accustomed to reading English and explaining its grammar than to speaking it. Most have had few if any opportunities to actually speak English, and their success as teachers is determined not by their speaking and listening skills but by their ability to prepare students to pass written English tests. (It involves almost no exaggeration to say that schools assess a teacher's value primarily on the basis of the percentage of his/her students who pass the tests.) Thus, while teachers who work in key schools may be able to communicate in English, they are not necessarily very fluent. Teachers from regular schools may hardly be able to speak or understand spoken English at all.

New curriculum: Over the last few years, Chinese middle schools have been gradually introducing a new set of English textbooks -- Junior English for China 1-3 and Senior English for China 1-3. These new books place more emphasis on speaking and listening skills than the previous texts did. In line with the new books, the senior middle school and university entrance examinations are now beginning to test English listening comprehension as well as reading and writing skills. Middle school teachers, especially those in regular schools, generally think the new materials are good, but find them difficult to teach. Teachers who lack confidence in their spoken English skills often tend to teach these materials the same way as they taught the old materials -- by explaining the grammar and vocabulary in Chinese.

Most teachers feel the new curriculum is generally an improvement over the old one, but it may have the unfortunate side-effect of further disadvantaging those students who are not in key schools. As the tests slowly change to reflect greater emphasis on oral skills, those students whose teachers can't or won't speak English will be at an increasing disadvantage, particularly because this is most likely in poorer schools where tapes and tape recorders are probably also lacking. (The new curriculum is an excellent topic for conversation with your students.)

Implications for Amity teachers:

1) An important part of your contribution lies in giving Chinese English teachers opportunity to practice and build their speaking skills. This is important not only so that teachers can speak English better, but also so that they become comfortable and confident enough in speaking English that they will speak English in class.

2) The new curriculum encourages teachers to use communicative methods such as pair and small group work which many Chinese teachers are not familiar with. By using such methods in your own English classes you present a model which helps stimulate teachers to try some of these approaches -- or modified versions of these approaches -- in their own classes.

3) Your presence is encouraging to teachers who badly need encouragement. The opportunity to speak with a real Westerner is exciting and makes use of English seem more real and alive. Also, your willingness to make the sacrifices involved in coming to China are encouraging for teachers who are sometimes discouraged by their work. (Even though your living conditions in China are above average, students and staff in your school don't need to be reminded that you could have been more comfortable at home.)

4) Your presence raises participant interest in knowing about other cultures and peoples, which in turn helps drive their interest in language study. You may also provide participants with their first opportunity to develop skills in understanding another culture and interacting across cultural lines.

5) One difficulty Chinese teachers face in rural middle schools is maintaining their own morale. Most of their students will never learn much English, and many will not go on even to an average senior middle school, let alone to a "key" school and a chance at higher education. Under these circumstances it is difficult to maintain a sense of purpose and pride in one's work, and this often means that instead of continuing to study after graduation teachers allow their English skills to deteriorate. Teachers who lack confidence in their own skills are prone to a lack of self-respect and are less likely to communicate enthusiasm for their subject when teaching. You cannot solve these problems, but you can help teachers build pride in their skills and interest in continued improvement of their skills. Teachers who have professional self-respect and who can find satisfaction in continuing the mastery of their art are more likely to maintain their skills and morale in difficult teaching environments.

The SEP Teaching Program

Goals and Underlying Principles

I. Primary Goals of the Summer English Program

To improve participants' oral English skills: The main goal of the program is to help participants become more comfortable and capable in oral communication, a goal achieved through providing extensive practice opportunities. The program also aims to improve participants' pronunciation, vocabulary, usage, and (optionally) writing skills.

To improve participants' knowledge of Western culture: An enriched knowledge of Western culture enhances participants' ability to teach culture, and cultural issues provide interesting subject matter for the practice of language skills.

To expose participants to new ideas and methods for English teaching: As participants experience teaching approaches which may be somewhat different from those they are accustomed to, they will be stimulated to consider new approaches to their own language teaching. In particular, the program will try to promote more communicative, learner-centered, and active approaches to language learning and teaching.

II. Basic Concepts Underlying the SEP

Emphasis on practice: For most Chinese students of English, the main problem is that their language learning diet has been rich in study but poor in practice. Thus participants in the program will know lots of words and grammar rules, but may not be able to speak or listen very well; they may often have problems actually applying their grammar knowledge in actual conversation. Hence the program should emphasize building skills through practice.

Emphasis on communication skills: Chinese English teachers generally know a great deal about English, but have had relatively little opportunity to use the English words and grammar they know to actually communicate ideas to other people. So the program should give students extensive opportunity to practice expressing their own ideas about as wide a range of topics as possible. Even if students struggle for vocabulary, by pushing themselves to talk about a wider range of topics, their ability to express ideas will improve.

Culture gap: Everybody will be more interested in class if there is genuine communication between teacher and participants, and the culture gap between foreign teachers and Chinese participants provides a natural opportunity for such communication. Thus, many of the activities suggested in Amity materials involve participants telling you about Chinese culture and you telling participants about Western culture.

Vocabulary: Participants will be more satisfied with the program if they learn at least some new vocabulary, but it is difficult to know which words will and will not be new to participants. So, as new words arise naturally from discussion, you should make note of these new words in a corner of the blackboard or on note cards posted on a "vocabulary wall", and then have

participants write new words into their notebooks. They might also write down example sentences.

Methodology: Many schools hold the SEP in part because they want Chinese participants to learn new teaching methods. However, we need to approach the question of teaching methodology carefully. Most Chinese participants in the SEP are experienced language teachers, and they know the Chinese teaching context well. In contrast, not all foreign teachers in the Summer English Program are professional teachers, and even SEP teachers who are professional language teachers may not be familiar with the Chinese setting or curriculum. For example, a technique which works well in the small classes of an SEP teacher may be impossible to use effectively in the much larger Chinese classes.

The SEP approaches the methodology issue in several ways:

1) The Learning English textbook used in the Learning and Teaching course discusses many ideas related to language learning. Effective language teaching needs to be based on a good understanding of language learning, and it is our hope discussion of the language learning issues in Learning English will prove stimulating and useful to SEP participants. Note that SEP teachers do not need to "sell" the ideas in Learning English; rather these ideas should serve as a stimulus to thought and discussion.

2) The teaching approaches used by SEP teachers are often rather different from those normally used by Chinese teachers, and one of the main benefits of the SEP program is that it exposes Chinese teachers to the new teaching approaches and ideas they see modeled in class. This leaves participants free to draw on and adapt these ideas as they like.

3) If there is an SEP team member with particular expertise in pedagogy, especially language teaching, it is good if some of the afternoon sessions can be devoted to demonstrations or workshops on teaching methodology.

The SEP Teaching Program Overview of Courses

While it is up to each team, in consultation with the host school, to determine the exact details of their particular program, Amity has a suggested schedule of courses and set of teaching materials which we encourage each team to use as the basis for their program.

I. The Morning Program

For the morning teaching program we suggest three different oral skills courses, each focusing on a basic aspect of human culture and life. The three courses are:

Talking About Daily Life (Daily Life): This is a course in which students practice talking about the nitty gritty of daily life, telling you about daily life in China and learning from you about daily life in your country. (See "The Daily Life Course" for more detail.)

Talking About People and Relationships (People): This course focuses on human relationships during different stages of life, addressing issues such as childhood and child raising, marriage, and old age. (See "The People and Relationships Course" for more detail.)

Talking About Learning and Teaching (Learning): This course is based on the Learning English textbook, and supplemented by conversation activities from the Toolkit. In this course, students discuss topics related to language learning and teaching; topics relating to education in general are also encouraged. While this is essentially still an oral skills course, like the others above, it is also a vehicle through which teacher and students can share ideas about learning and teaching. If at all possible, this course should be taught by the SEP team member(s) with the most teaching experience. (See "The Learning and Teaching Course" for more detail.)

The materials for each course are designed so that the teacher has a choice of different activities for each lesson. For lower level classes, easier activities should be chosen; for higher level classes, more challenging activities. In each course the goal is to challenge students by expanding the range of topics they are able to talk about, and also building the level of complexity at which they are able to discuss the topics. A more specific introduction to each course is provided in the following pages.

II. The Afternoon Program

We suggest that the afternoon be divided into two sessions, first a course called "My Country and Yours," and then a session for English Corner or other activities.

The "My Country and Yours" Course: This course consists of talks or presentations about your country and society, preceded and followed by discussion activities. For this course, we recommend that you:

- 1) combine small classes into larger groups, and then take turns teaching the large class on alternate afternoons;
- 2) rotate between classes, giving the same talk to different classes on different days;

3) both of the above.

Any combination of the above strategies prevents you from having to prepare a new presentation each afternoon. (See "The My Country and Yours Course" for more detail.)

English Corner/Activities: This is a relatively unscheduled time slot for informal conversation or other such activities as you wish to arrange. We suggest that this be conducted with two or more classes combined, thus leaving some teachers free to take time off if necessary. (See "The English Corner and Activities Period" for more detail.)

The SEP Teaching Program Suggested Daily Schedules

I. Recommended Daily Schedule

The recommended daily schedule is three one-hour regular class periods in the morning, one one-hour regular class period in the afternoon, and an additional one hour English Corner/Activities period in the afternoon. The recommended daily schedule is as follows:

8:00 - 9:00 Period One
9:10 - 10:10 Period Two
10:30 - 11:30 Period Three
3:00 - 4:00 Period Four (except Friday)
4:10 - 5:10 English Corner/Activities (except Friday)

Beginning and ending times can vary depending on the school, but be sure to allow at least the customary two and a half hour break at lunch time.

II. Alternative Daily Schedule

In exceptional situations where it is impossible to schedule classes in the afternoon, all four courses should be scheduled in the morning as follows:

8:00 - 8:50 Period One
9:00 - 9:50 Period Two
10:00 - 10:50 Period Three
11:00 - 11:50 Period Four

English Corner and other activities would then be omitted or scheduled as the local situation permits.

III. Note: Need for Flexibility

Local conditions vary considerably from one part of China to another, and it is possible that when you arrive at your teaching location either the host school or you will wish to modify the suggested schedule in one way or another so that your program better suits local realities. Always be ready to be flexible.

The SEP Teaching Program

Suggested Course Schedule Plans

I. Suggested Morning Course Schedules

In the following schedules:

"Daily Life" = Daily Life Course

"People" = People and Relationships Course

"Learning" = Learning and Teaching Course

Three-Person Team (students divided into three classes)

	Tom	Sue	Bob
Period 1	Daily Life/Class 2	People/Class 3	Learning/Class 1
Period 2	Daily Life/Class 3	People/Class 1	Learning/Class 2
Period 3	People/Class 2	Learning/Class 3	Daily Life/Class 1

Four-Person Team (students divided into four classes)

	Tom	Sue	Bob	Clara
Period 1	Learning/Class 1	Learning/Class 3	Daily Life/Class 2	Daily Life/Class 4
Period 2	Learning/Class 2	Learning/Class 4	Daily Life/Class 1	Daily Life/Class 3
Period 3	People/Class 1	People/Class 3	People/Class 2	People/Class 4

Five-Person Team (students divided into five classes)

	Tom	Sue	Bob	Clara	Ed
Period 1	Learning/1	Learning/3	Daily Life/2	Daily Life/4	People/5
Period 2	Learning/2	Learning/4	Daily Life/3	Daily Life/5	People/1
Period 3	Daily Life/1	People/3	People/2	People/4	Learning/5

Six-Person Team (students divided into six classes)

For a six-person team, simply use the suggested schedule for a three-person team twice, effectively dividing the teaching program into two teams of three.

Notes:

1. The schedules above are recommended, not set in stone. Adapt them to suit your own needs and local conditions.
2. The schedules above are designed so that as often as possible you can use at least some of the lessons you prepare more than once. They are also designed so that each class of students sees at least two different teachers each day, preferably three. Contact with different teachers is good for students' development in English, especially their listening. It is also easier to maintain interest

when students aren't with the same teacher all day. We strongly advise against schedules where the same teacher teaches the same students all morning!!! Such schedules make it much harder for both the teacher and the participants to maintain interest, and are extremely unfair to less experienced teachers and the classes to which they are assigned.

3. The schedules above give each teacher a "home class," i.e. one class of students that the teacher has for two different courses, usually the first and last periods of the day. This ensures there is at least one class of students you come to know fairly well.

4. In China, students normally remain in the same classroom while teachers move, but most SEP teachers have felt that it is better if students move and teachers keep the same classroom. This allows teachers to decorate the classroom and may help keep students more alert.

II. Afternoon Course Schedule Suggestions

The "My Country and Yours" Course

We feel that the afternoon schedule should be more flexible than the morning schedule, and that not every teacher should be expected to prepare and teach a lesson each afternoon. For this reason, we make the following suggestions in scheduling the "My Country and Yours" course:

Combine classes: If possible, combine two smaller classes into one larger class, allowing teachers to trade off responsibility for preparing talks or presentations. This will obviously work more neatly if your students are divided into four or six classes, but may also be possible even if students in your program are divided into three or five classes. (Whether classes can be combined like this will also depend on whether or not your host school has suitably large classrooms; however, this should not be a problem in most schools.)

Rotate classes: Another way you can avoid having teachers constantly preparing new talks or presentations is by rotating classes, i.e. giving the same talk or presentation to different groups on different days. (Ex: Clara gives her talk to combined Class 1 and 2 on Monday, and the same one to combined Class 3 and 4 on Tuesday.) This allows you to use the same talk or presentation more than once and also exposes the students to a variety of different voice and styles.

The English Corner and Activity Period

We suggest that, as with the "My Country and Yours" course, English Corner and/or other activities also be conducted with combined classes. This allows teachers to take turns attending, instead of expecting everyone to be on duty every afternoon. Combining classes also gives students some people to talk to other than the classmates with whom they spend the entire morning. This is an opportunity for students with better conversational skills to mentor those needing encouragement in speaking English.

Friday Afternoons

We suggest Friday afternoon be free, so that students can go home over the weekend more easily, and you can take a break. If facilities and equipment are available, this is a good time to show a movie for those who live in town or will not be traveling home.

The Daily Life Course

Introduction

The fundamental idea of the Daily Life course is that one of the best ways for students to build speaking and listening skills is through practice discussing a wide range of topics, especially topics which students have not previously discussed in English. The range of topics covered in this course consists of the nuts and bolts of daily life and experience: food, clothing, work, entertainment, and so forth. These topics not only provide the raw material students use to practice their oral English skills; they also provide a valuable opportunity for teachers and students to learn more about fundamental aspects of each other's cultures.

Goals of the Course

The purpose of the Daily Life course is to help students build the following skills:

- Speaking fluency: Building students' ability to use the English words and structures they already know to express their thoughts.
- Listening fluency: Increasing the speed with which students can hear and make sense of natural English speech.
- Ability to guess: Building both the ability and willingness of students to guess as they listen to natural English.
- Ability to explain: Build students' ability to explain their ideas, especially to someone from another culture who does not always know and understand the same things students do. An important part of this is being able to "repair" communication when things go wrong; for example, to spot and correct misunderstandings, to find alternative ways to explain ideas when the first attempt fails, and so forth.
- Vocabulary: Increasing the range of vocabulary students know as well as their skill at explaining what they mean within the limits of the vocabulary they possess.

Materials: Ten Recommended Lessons

The teaching material for the Daily Life course is found in the "Daily Life" and "Popular Culture and Arts" modules in the SEP Toolkit. You are welcome to use any of the topics and activities in these two modules for the Daily Life course. Since each of these lessons contains enough material to cover more than one class period, we have singled out ten units as possibilities for further consideration.

From the "Talking About Daily Life" module

Getting To Know Each Other
Daily Schedules
Food
Clothing

Work
Recreation and Entertainment
Shopping

From the "Popular Culture and Arts" module

Movies
Sports

Music

Notes

1. While the focus of this course is on building communication skills, the teacher can and should introduce new vocabulary and phrases as the need for them arises naturally from activities. Participants should be encouraged to keep a notebook and to write new words etc. into the notebook.
2. Some units will provide enough material for about two class periods. However, this is entirely up to your discretion. You may choose to deal with a particular unit/topic in just one class period, or stretch it out over three or more if students are interested and you have adequate material.

The People and Relationships Course

Introduction

Like the Daily Life course, the People and Relationships course is mainly for building speaking and listening skills through practice discussing topics which students may not have previously discussed in English. People and Relationships covers topics dealing with the relationships and stages of human life. The topics and activities in this course create ample opportunity for teachers and students to discuss and explore similarities and differences between East and West in how they view these basic aspects of human life.

Goals of the course (see "Daily Life" course)

Materials: Ten Recommended Lessons

The teaching material for the People and Relationships course is found in the "Talking About the Cycle of Life" and "Talking About Relationships" modules in the SEP Toolkit. You may use any of the topics and activities in these two modules for the Cycle of Life course. However, you might consider organizing your course more or less into ten two-hour lessons, as follows:

- My Life (materials from "Cycle of Life/My Life" and "Relationships/My Family")
- Dating (materials from "Cycle of Life/Dating and Choosing a Mate")
- Marriage (materials from "Cycle of Life/Marriage," "Relationships/Husbands and Wives," and "Relationships/Men and Women")
- Parents and Children (materials from "Relationships/Parents and Children" and "Cycle of Life/Childhood and Child Raising")
- Retirement (materials from "Cycle of Life/Retirement")
- Friends (materials from "Relationships/Friends")
- Relatives (materials from "Relationships/Relatives")
- Bosses and Employees (materials from "Relationships/Bosses and Employees")
- Hosts and Guests (materials from "Relationships/Hosts and Guests")
- Strangers (materials from "Relationships/Strangers")

Note

1. As with the Daily Life course, while the focus of this course is on building communication skills, the teacher can and should introduce new vocabulary and phrases as the need for them arises naturally from activities. Participants should be encouraged to keep a notebook, and to write new words etc. into the notebook.

2. Some units will provide enough material for about two class periods. However, this is entirely up to your discretion. You may choose to deal with a particular unit/topic in just one class period, or stretch it out over three or more if students are interested and you have adequate material.

The Learning and Teaching Course

Introduction

This is an oral skills course in which students and teachers discuss issues related to language learning and language teaching. It is not intended to be a methodology course per se, but as students (Chinese teachers of English) talk to each other and to Western teachers about language learning and teaching issues, there will be a mutually beneficial sharing of ideas and experiences that will enhance the language learning and teaching skills of all parties.

Primary Goals of the Course

Build students' speaking and listening skills: This special course allows students to practice discussing professional issues (language learning and teaching) in English.

Share ideas about language learning: This course will expose students to ideas for language learning through the textbook (Learning English), through discussion with classmates, and through conversation with you. While language teaching will almost certainly become part of your focus in the course, the primary focus should remain on language learning, and you should emphasize that a good understanding of language learning is the foundation of good language teaching.

Build students' ability to read about their profession in English: This secondary goal helps lay the foundation for building students' ability to discuss professional issues in English.

Materials

The primary material for this course is the book Learning English. Additional materials can be found in the "Talking About Teaching and Education" and "Talking About Language Learning" modules in the Toolkit.

Our recommendation is that Learning English be used as much as possible for the course, serving as its core textbook, and that the Toolkit materials be used to supplement. While it is up to you to decide how to use these materials for your courses, we suggest two possible approaches:

The "Learning English Heavy" Approach. If students do not find Learning English inordinately difficult, we suggest that you plan to teach all or most of the units, and only draw occasionally on the Toolkit material. We recommend that Learning English be used as much as possible for several reasons:

1) More variety: Use of a textbook in at least one course adds variety and "meat" to the SEP diet. In particular, it provides some reading practice, as well as ample opportunity to practice speaking and listening skills. Without Learning English, SEP is an almost unrelieved diet of speaking and listening activities -- too much of a good thing. (Of course, even much of Learning English consists of speaking and listening activities.)

2) More language input: Through the reading texts and exercises, Learning English gives students important language input, especially vocabulary and sentence structures used to discuss issues related to language learning and teaching.

3) More content input: The reading texts in Learning English present ideas about language learning which can serve as a good springboard for discussion of professional issues.

4) Facilitates study: Having a textbook allows students to prepare and review.

The "Learning English Lite" Approach. If some students find the reading texts in Learning English quite difficult, we suggest you adopt a "Learning English Lite" approach in which you only teach a few selected units, and also only use selected parts of the material in each unit. (Encourage students to study the other units on their own after the SEP program ends.)

To decide which of these approaches (or related variations) to use, we recommend that during the first week you try out the first unit in Learning English with your students and see how it goes.

- If students have to devote an overwhelming amount of their time and energy to just scraping through the reading text, and they simply don't have the English to discuss the issues Learning English raises, go with a Learning English Lite approach.
- If students don't have inordinate difficulty with the Learning English reading passages, go with a Learning English Heavy approach.

Keep in mind that the other SEP courses probably won't require much homework, so there is nothing wrong with expecting students to put some work into the Learning English materials. The key issue to consider in deciding how much of Learning English to use is not whether or not reading the passages or discussing the issues is "hard;" rather, the key issue is whether or not the effort invested is productive and useful.

Suggestions on teaching Learning English (see also "To The Teacher" in Learning English)

1) Do not feel obligated to teach all of the Learning English units during the four-week SEP program. Students should be told from the beginning that they will use some of the units from Learning English, but not necessarily all of them. (You may allow students some choice in which units are to be covered.)

2) You are not expected to cover every activity in any given Learning English unit. In fact, you should pick and choose. By design, each unit has more material than necessary, allowing you to pick and choose those activities that are best suited to your students.

3) How much time you devote to a Learning English unit is up to you. However, as an initial rule of thumb, you might plan to cover a unit in one or two class periods, and then adjust as necessary.

4) Ideally students should read the Learning English articles as homework, but if this is not possible you will need to allow some class time for them to read.

5) Your role when teaching Learning English is not to teach language learning strategies per se (though you are welcome to do this if you so desire). Rather your role is to:

- 1) help students understand the text;
- 2) lead discussion of the issues raised.

You are not expected to "sell" the ideas in the text or be an expert in all the issues raised. As a matter of fact, if you slip into the expert role, "teaching" the ideas in Learning English, you limit students' freedom to discuss the ideas in Learning English and decide for themselves what they think. If you let the Learning English articles speak for themselves, you can enjoy exploring and debating the ideas along with your students.

Teaching Learning English to lower level students

The skills of some SEP students may be quite low, and some may find Learning English a challenge to read and comprehend. Part of the problem is that students will encounter unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. However, another problem is that the ideas in Learning English may be different from what students expect. In particular, students may expect to find a systematic list of instructions on how they should learn English - or even how they should teach English. However, they will quickly discover that Learning English is intended more to provoke discussion than to present a single "right" view of how English should be learned. (While Learning English often does express these opinions, these are often intended largely to spark discussion.) This somewhat open-ended nature of Learning English creates room for genuine discussion, but students may initially find it disconcerting and even confusing.

Here are a few suggestions that might help you in teaching Learning English to lower-level classes:

Instructions on reading a Learning English passage: Instead of just telling students to "read Unit 1" (or whatever), ask them to read (either at home or in-class) using the following procedure:

Step 1: The first time they read the passage, they should not stop to look up unfamiliar words in the dictionary. Rather, they should 1) mark unfamiliar words; 2) try to understand as many of the ideas as they can.

Step 2: Next have them go back to deal with unfamiliar words, either by looking them up in the dictionary or trying to guess by context. (The latter works occasionally and is worth trying in class from time to time, but is often too difficult.)

Step 3: Finally have them re-read the passage. This final stage is important and should not be skipped. This time students should mark any words or sentences that they still don't understand, and be prepared to ask about these in class.

Note: Chinese students are used to working hard on a reading passage and looking up vocabulary words. If you find they are putting hours into a short passage, the passage is too hard, but 30 minutes to an hour is not unreasonable.

Vocabulary problems in-class: If you just ask students "Does anyone have any vocabulary questions?" you may well get little or no response. Suggestions:

1) Require students to mark vocabulary problems in their books. Then, in class, you can point to someone and say "Give me one word that you marked."

2) When you explain words, use examples as much as possible. These are often easier for students to understand than explanation is. Demonstrate the use of the word in another sentence.

3) As you explain words, focus on their meaning in the context of the passage. The goal is to understand what the word means in this given case, not to explain all its possible meanings.

Complex sentences:

- 1) As above, ask students to mark these as they read so they are ready to ask questions.
- 2) To explain long, complex sentences, break them down into smaller sentences.

General comprehension: One problem students may have when reading passages in Learning English passages (or anything else in English) is that they focus more on language than on meaning. In other words, they become so absorbed in the vocabulary and grammar that they lose sight of the forest for the trees. So it is generally valuable to spend some time ensuring that students understand at least the main ideas of the passage. Suggestions:

1) One way to do this is by having students answer the comprehension questions in the textbook.

2) Alternatively, call on students or ask for volunteers to each contribute one idea from the passage. You then write it on the board. After a number of ideas have been listed, ask students to decide which they think were most important. (If this task seems difficult for students, allow them to work on it in small groups for a few minutes before you ask each group to give you one of the ideas from the passage.)

Other notes

1. Because this course is about education and language learning and teaching issues, it is best if the teacher is someone who is a teacher (primary, secondary, or tertiary), or reasonably familiar with schools and education.

2. Because this course will have a textbook and the others won't, students may assume this is the main course of the program, and fix their attention and efforts disproportionately on this course. You may need to remind students from time to time that, despite the absence of a textbook, the other courses are equally important.

Suggestions for courses where students' skills are extremely weak

If discussion of language learning and teaching issues is beyond your students' English skills, you might replace the Learning and Teaching course with the Dialogue Course (see Toolkit). This course builds accuracy in grammar, usage, and pronunciation through work with short dialogues.

Suggestions for classes with relatively strong skills

Students in some SEP courses may find Learning English quite easy. In this case, one idea is to challenge students by having them select an interesting topic from the Learning English textbook and develop a researched opinion on it. Their opinion should be based on primary data, collected through methods such as surveying classmates with a questionnaire; interviewing classmates; observing classes; or conducting a test. Students could then make presentations in class, or write their project up as a paper.

The My Country and Yours Course

Introduction

The fundamental idea of the My Country and Yours course is that a good way to build listening skills is to play to students' natural curiosity about other nations and cultures -- not to mention their professional need to know more about these. Through talks and presentations on various aspects of your country's life and culture (or on the life and culture of other English-speaking countries), you give students much needed listening practice while also teaching them valuable cultural information.

Goals of the Course

Western culture: To increase student's knowledge about your culture and the culture of other English-speaking countries.

Listening endurance: To build students' ability to listen for longer periods to talk about more sophisticated topics.

Listening fluency: To build the speed with which students can hear and make sense of natural English speech.

Ability to guess: To build both students' ability and willingness to guess as they listen to natural English.

Ability to explain: To build students' ability to talk in English about their own culture.

Typical lesson "menu"

For the My Country and Yours course, we suggest that the core of each lesson be a short talk or presentation of some kind. However, on hot afternoons, students whose listening comprehension skills are limited generally cannot sit for long periods listening to lectures without losing interest or simply getting lost, so it is also good for talks or presentations to be preceded and followed by more interactive activities that give students a chance to speak and get involved (and wake up).

We suggest that most afternoon lessons be based on some variation of the following menu:

1) Appetizer: Start out with some kind of interactive activity like a survey, a quick small group task, classroom chat, or a lively game. In addition to activities in the Toolkit, you might look in books like Penny Ur and Andrew Wright's Five Minute Activities: A Resource Book of Short Activities (Cambridge University Press). However, it is best if the activity is at least tangentially related to the afternoon's topic.

2) Main Course: Usually this would be a talk or presentation on some aspect of your culture. However, it could also be a longer and meatier activity of some other kind, for example, a workshop on teaching methods.

3) Dessert: Finish off the lesson with another interactive activity based on the topic addressed in the talk, such as a pair-work activity, a discussion activity, or a craft activity (such as dying Easter eggs or making Christmas ornaments after a Holiday lesson.)

Recommended Materials

Material for the My Country and Yours course can be found in the "Talking About Our Nation" and "Talking About Our Society" modules in the SEP Toolkit. You are welcome to use any of the material in these modules. However, units to which you might give special consideration are:

From the "Talking About Our Nation" module:

Visiting My Country
Geography
The Climate
The People
Holidays

History
Famous People
Heroes and Villains
National Symbols

From the "Talking About Our Society" module:

City and Countryside
Government and Political Life
Economic Life and Development
Medical Care
Law and Order

Science and Technology
Philosophy and Religion
Languages and Dialects
Social Problems
Environment and Ecology

In addition to these materials, you are welcome to do talks and presentations on other topics, especially those relevant to better understanding of your culture. We do, however, recommend that lessons include interactive activity, rather than consisting entirely of lecture.

Notes

1. While the focus of this course is on building listening skills and culture knowledge, you can also introduce new vocabulary and phrases as the need for them arises. Students should be encouraged to write new words etc. into a notebook.
2. Usually one unit will provide enough material for one afternoon session. However, you may choose to stretch one unit/topic over two or more periods.
3. One way to make talks more interactive is to turn them into "press conferences." (See Toolkit, "Kinds of Activities for Practicing Oral Skills -- Teacher Interview").
4. Unlike the morning classes, we suggest that you combine classes in the afternoon, rotate classes, or both. This will help you avoid having to prepare a new talk or presentation every afternoon. (See "Suggested Course Schedule Plans.")

The English Corner/Activities Period

For the final period of each teaching day, we suggest that either an "English corner" or some other kind of activity be scheduled.

English Corners

An "English Corner" is a free-wheeling activity in which participants mingle and chat with each other in English. Sometimes there is a suggested topic, other times people talk about whatever they want.

Students may initially expect you to take charge of English corners. We feel it is actually best if students are encouraged to take as much initiative as possible, so we hope that the SEP team does not always plan what goes on during this period. However, there are several things you can do that will make English corners more effective:

1) Teach students how a Western cocktail party works and then have them conduct as English Corner following "cocktail party" rules. (See Toolkit, "Kinds of Activities for Practicing Oral Skills -- Cocktail Party.") You should also explain the duties of a host, who helps guests meet each other and find a good conversation topic.

2) Organize students -- or have them organize themselves -- so that hosts are assigned for each English Corner. The duty of these hosts is to see that other students have people to talk to, and even to encourage people to change partners from time to time. They may also suggest topics as necessary. (Often there is no need to provide topics for the first few English Corner activities when people are still getting to know each other, but later it may be helpful to suggest conversation topics.)

3) Change the setting for the English Corner. Move out onto the school grounds or go to a neighboring park if weather permits. Visit a local teahouse.

4) Use survey questions or cards with life or values questions to help initiate conversations between students. Trigger switching partners and cards to encourage conversation between students with different oral skill levels.

Students will no doubt appreciate it if teachers participate in English Corner with them, but it is not necessary for every teacher to participate every day. We suggest that team members divide responsibility into roughly equal portions, several team members participating on a given day while one team member take time off to prepare lessons or simply take a break.

Other Activities:

One or two days a week, one or more team members may wish to afternoon time for an activity (demonstration, etc.) related to some topic they are especially interested in and would like to share with students about. Some possibilities include the following:

Teaching methodology workshops: If you have someone on your team who is able and willing to do presentations, demonstration lessons, or workshops on language teaching, these would be welcomed by SEP participants in most programs. Students are also often very interested in ideas for learning English more effectively. One possibility would be a workshop based on language

and culture questions participants encounter as they teach Junior English for China or Senior English for China. (It may be necessary to do different sessions for junior middle school teachers and senior middle school teachers. Their English skill levels may be quite different, and so is the kind of English teaching they do.)

Special activities: Ideas for special afternoon or evening activities:

- Learning songs.
- Performing a mock wedding.
- Learning and playing baseball or another sport/game from your country.
- Learning square dances.
- Learning how to cook food from your country.
- Having a holiday party (Christmas, Halloween, etc.)
- Playing games (Uno, Scrabble, Bingo, etc.).
- Playing games requiring conversation responses
- Doing a graduation ceremony.
- Learning about one of your hobbies.
- Having a talent show.
- Having a mock (or real) Western meal.
- Having students act as tour guides to show you around campus (a park, local museum, etc.). This would involve having them prepare to introduce whatever they are showing you in English.
- Having students act as translators as you interview local people about their lives.
- Showing movies.
- Having students prepare and present a news broadcast.
- Having students prepare and present an advertising campaign.
- Doing values clarification exercises (lost on a desert island, and so forth).
- Holding a job fair, with employers interviewing potential candidates.
- Demonstrating activities from school life in your country.
- Having students act out fairy tales.

Other ideas can be found in the Toolkit, "Activity Grab Bag."

Intercultural communication activities: In the Toolkit there are a set of "culture puzzle" activities in which a Chinese person encounters puzzling behavior on the part of a foreigner. After you present the situation to students, they need to brainstorm as many possible explanations of the foreigners' behavior as they can think of. These are good not only for introducing aspects of culture but also for building good habits of intercultural understanding. See: Toolkit, "Cross-Cultural Communication Exercises for Oral Skills Classes."

Placement Interviews

Ting Yen-ren and Don Snow

Introduction: After arrival, in most schools you will need to divide participants into classes according to their English levels. This is generally done on the basis of placement interviews conducted before the course begins. (Some schools may have ideas about placement which differ from the above, and may even have already placed students into classes. You should still do placement interviews, if at all possible, because this enables you to get a better feeling for your students before the first day of class.)

As you interview participants, your main goal is to divide them into groups according to their ability to communicate and interact in English, not according to the number of errors they make. For the purposes of this program, a participant who makes many errors but communicates fairly well should be in a higher class than one who is accurate but communicates poorly.

Preparing for the interview

1) Become familiar with the four different proficiency levels (see Proficiency Scale) so that you can more rapidly decide to which level a participant belongs.

2) Prepare a list of questions for the interview. Most questions, especially for Part II of the interview, should call for more than "yes/no" or one-word answers. In other words, a "Tell me about" question is better than a "Do you" question.

3) You should have several possible questions for each part of the interview, and also questions of different levels of difficulty. (See Sample Questions.) Having more questions than you need for any one interview allows you to vary questions to keep things more interesting, and also prevents early students from being able to tell later students what the interview consists of.

4) Schedule interviews so that you have a few minutes with each person, and at least a minute or two between interviews to allow you to make a ranking and take an occasional break.

Conducting the "Three-Step Interview"

Part I: (Brief) Start the interview with one or two easy questions ("How are you today?" "What is your name?" etc.) that will put the participant at ease. Many participants will be nervous because they have never talked to a foreigner before and are unaccustomed to your accent, and also because they see the interview as a test. It helps if you smile and seem friendly, and it helps if they are able to answer at least one or two questions. During this part of the interview, try to get an initial idea of which level the participant belongs in.

Part II: (Longer) Ask questions that require more than single word or phrase answers. If you sense that a participant's level is low, start with one or two easy questions, and if he/she has trouble, go on to Part III and end the interview. If she/he seems more advanced, try more difficult questions. In general, if your questions seem too hard, try easier ones. If they seem too easy, try harder ones. (If a participant has difficulty with even the easy questions of Part I, skip directly to Part III).

Part III: (Brief) Once you think you have an idea of the participant's level, close the interview with a relatively easy question so that the participant leaves the interview feeling good.

Ranking participants: Decide which level the participant seems to belong to and write down your decision. If you feel that the participant is especially high or low within a category, you might also add a plus or minus sign (Ex: Beginner +, Intermediate -, etc.) This will help if, as is

likely, you find many people fall into the same category. It is better to place a student into a lower class when you are unsure. Move him/her up after you spend classroom time with them if it seems appropriate. It is embarrassing for a student to be moved to lower level.

Placement Interview: Sample Questions

Part I (easy introductory questions)

How are you today?

What is your name?

Where do you teach?

What grade do you teach?

(Add your own)

Part II (questions for different levels)

(Relatively easy)

Tell me about your family.

Tell me about your daily schedule.

Tell me about your hometown

(Add your own)

(A little more challenging)

How did you learn English?

How did you become a teacher?

What do you like most about teaching? Least?

What do you like most about your students? Least?

What do you hope to learn in this summer program?

(Add your own)

(Relatively challenging)

Tell me about the textbook you use for teaching English. What is good about it? What is not good?

If you were going to revise this textbook what would you do?

What are the main difficulties you face in teaching?

(Add your own)

Part III (easy closing questions)

How long have you been teaching?

What school did you graduate from?

Have you ever met a foreigner before?

(Also look at the "relatively easy" questions in Part II above.)

Proficiency Placement Scale: Summer English Program¹

Novice level:

General: All oral communication is difficult. Communication breaks down frequently, even on simple topics.

Topic range: Can only answer most basic and predictable questions (Ex: What is your name?). Probably won't initiate conversation at all.

Listening: Often can't understand simple, short questions and sentences, even when you repeat.

Speaking: Has trouble making even short sentences, and often does so very slowly. Tends to answer questions with single words or short phrases.

Pronunciation: May be hard to understand.

Other: Often very nervous speaking English; may not respond to you at all. (Some Beginners may initially be ranked as Novices because they are too nervous/shy to speak.)

Beginner level:

General: Can answer and ask simple questions without breaking down, but communication becomes very difficult or breaks down if you ask questions involving explanation or answers longer than a sentence.

Range: Can talk about self/immediate environment, but has vocabulary problems on most other topics.

Listening: Can understand you when you speak slowly and clearly and keep vocabulary simple, although you may need to repeat.

Speaking: Can express self using phrases and sentences (although there may be many errors). Does not often give longer answers to questions, or try to express complicated ideas.

Pronunciation: May be hard to understand.

Intermediate level:

General/Range: Can discuss a range of topics, though often runs into difficulty expressing ideas. Communication does not often break down.

Listening: Can understand much of what you say when you speak clearly and not too fast; still has difficulty if you speak quickly or naturally.

Speaking: Can explain ideas, tell stories, and engage in longer discourse. Still many errors and problems knowing how to express ideas, but can usually find a way around problems.

Pronunciation: Has accent, but generally intelligible.

Advanced level:

General/Range: Can discuss a wide range of issues without serious difficulty.

Listening: Can often understand you even when you speak quickly and naturally.

Speaking: Can express even complex ideas, although may still make errors.

Pronunciation: Has accent, but easily intelligible.

¹ Based on American Council on Foreign Language Teaching guidelines.

Tips on Teaching Oral Skills - Especially to Lower Level Classes

Don Snow

Below are some of the problems I see most often in SEP-type English classes, and a few suggestions for dealing with these problems.

Giving instructions: One of the most common reasons discussion activities don't go well is that the instructions are not sufficiently clear, either because they are too complicated or not presented clearly.

Tips:

- Write down your instructions in advance, even verbatim.
- Keep instructions short, clear, and simple. Students normally only understand part of what you say, so instructions need to be especially clear if you want students to understand well.
- When you deliver instructions, speak more slowly and clearly than normal. It may also help to repeat them.
- Be prepared to mime. As you plan lessons, you might think of ways in which you can show students what you want them to do if they don't understand your instructions. (This will help make the mime a fun addition to the lesson rather than a frustrated last resort.)

Assigning specific "tasks": Another reason discussion activities fail to get off the ground is that the task assigned is too vague and students aren't quite sure what to do. Instructing students to "talk about" or "discuss" something doesn't give them a very clear direction.

Tips: Discussion starts up and moves with more purpose if you assign students a more specific task such as:

- make a list
- make a decision
- find out what everyone thinks about....
- design a plan. Etc.

Real communication: Students generally talk more enthusiastically if they are really communicating with each other and with you.

Tips: "Real" communication involves:

- Talking to somebody about something that is of interest to both parties.
- Putting one's own ideas into words.
- An "information gap," i.e. A telling B something B doesn't already know.

Telling students "why": Students generally plunge into any task with more enthusiasm if they know why they are doing what they are doing.

Tips:

- Before an activity, tell students why they are doing the activity, and what skills and/or language knowledge they are developing through the activity.

Working with groups: Group activities generally go better if groups don't spend a lot of time deciding how to organize themselves.

Tips: You can speed up the process and make activities seem more focused and directional by giving clear instructions as to group organization. Suggestions:

- Either group students yourself or give clear instructions as to how students should group themselves.
- Tell each group to pick someone to take notes.
- Try not to have more than 3-4 students in a group. As the group gets larger than 4, chances to speak decrease, students sit further from each other, it becomes harder for students in the group to hear each other (this a real issue in many classrooms), and interest in the activity plummets.

Getting students to talk: Sometimes when you ask questions or assign activities, students are slow to respond.

Tips:

- Make sure instructions are clear. One reason students don't respond is often that they aren't quite sure what you mean or what you want them to do.
- See that the question or task is not too difficult conceptually or in the demands it places on students' English skills.
- Make sure your questions and tasks are intellectually appropriate for adults. Sometimes a question or task is too simple and students don't respond because they don't find it challenging (or because they assume that such a simple question must be a trick). "Real" communication helps a lot.
- Sometimes students don't respond in general class discussions because they haven't had time to decide what they think about something. It may help to give students a minute or so to think and jot down a few notes, either individually or in small groups.

Writing unfamiliar vocabulary on board: One of the students' main listening comprehension problems is that there are many English words they can read but wouldn't readily recognize when they hear them.

Tips:

- If you talk about a subject, it often helps to write some of the key words on the board. This not only makes it easier for students to learn those words -- and write them into a notebook -- but also gives them clues which makes it easier to figure out what you are talking about.

Other suggestions for working with students whose listening comprehension is poor:

Use lots of visual aids. Pictures, stick drawings on the board, objects, whatever.

Keep instructions simple. Make any instructions you give as simple as possible.

- Keep activities as simple as possible. If you try a complicated activity - no matter how good - you may well bog down completely just trying to explain it.
- In preparation for class, actually practice giving your instructions - it is often only when you start saying them out loud that you realize they are more complicated than you thought.

Less explanation -- more examples. Don't expect students to understand explanations. Rather, give examples. Also:

- Draw pictures on the board.
- Explain new words by giving the antonym (if it is more familiar than the word you are trying to teach.)
- Again, mime.

Repeat: Sometimes when students don't understand something you said, the problem is that not that they can't understand, but rather that they can't process semi-familiar words fast enough. If you respond to their incomprehension by changing what you say right away (the moving target) or by launching into an explanation (the dreaded torrent of speech) you may discourage and confuse them more than helping them. So if students don't understand you, the first thing to try is repeating the same thing again, but perhaps more slowly and clearly. This gives them a second chance to process what you said and make sense of it. If this fails, then try simplifying what you said or some other strategy.

Use familiar activities. In your lesson plan, include some "traditional" activities like choral drill, dictation, or dialogue memorization. These are usually familiar to students, so don't require much explaining, and give students a break from the constant strain of trying to comprehend what you want them to do.

Five Do's and Don't's in a Conversation Class: Basics for those New to ESL

Ting Yen-ren

Attitude

Do show interest in students' lives, ask genuine questions, and have them give and compare different answers.

Do not simply say "Good" and move on without further soliciting.

Content of Interaction

Do introduce topics students truly want to discuss, i.e. topics of their interest and concern, or topics covered in JEC and SEC.

Do not stay on a topic when new ideas on it are running out.

Teacher-Student Interaction

Do direct your attention to all students in class all the time and give everyone a turn to speak, even if it is only a chance to say a few words.

Do not only talk to a few good students, nor let one person talk for more than one minute unless there is clear evidence that others will respond.

Teacher's Presentation

Do pause after every few sentences when you speak, especially when you set up an activity, to ask a few students one by one if they understand you. Use the blackboard if helpful.

Do not assume students understand your "simple English," nor talk at length without comprehension checks.

Student-Student Interaction

Do encourage spontaneous speech from everyone in class and encourage students to listen to each other and respond to each other.

Do not let a student recite a prepared script unless the presentation engages the class and he or she or you constantly check for comprehension.

Testing and Grading

Don Snow

I. Grading

We suggest that teams give either a "pass" or "fail" grade to each participant in the Summer English Program, not a percentage grade as we have suggested in previous years. This change should reduce test anxiety among students and also make life simpler for you. It may also result in students taking the program a little less seriously, but we hope this will not be too much of a problem.

Our general grading recommendations are as follows:

"Pass" is for any student who attends the program regularly and makes an attempt to do the work. We hope most or all students will get a "pass."

"Fail" grades should be reserved for students who simply don't try -- and we hope that most teams will not need to give any of these.

"Incomplete" grades can be given to students who miss too many classes.

II. Evaluation

It would be possible to give students pass/fail/incomplete grades based just on attendance and participation. However, human nature being what it is, you will probably find that students take the program more seriously and work harder if they know there will be at least some kind of evaluation. So we feel there should be at least some kind of assessment for each course. These assessments measures might include some combination of the following:

- counting participation toward the final grade;
- counting students' notebooks toward their final grade;
- giving a small group final examination at the end of the program;
- giving individual interviews at the end of the program.

More detail is given about each of these below.

Participation.

We suggest that in each course, students be told that participation in both the morning and afternoon activities will count toward their final grade. This rewards effort and encourages students to speak as much as possible in class.

The process of doing this need not be very formal. Once or twice during the program, listen in on small groups as they do a discussion task, taking notes on participation. This reinforces the importance of the small group and pair practice participants engage in during the whole program.

- You may need to do this over more than one class period to hear each group.
- In order to avoid students all rushing to speak so that they get a better grade, tell them that you will consider not only whether or not they talk, but on how well they work together as a group to discuss an issue (giving everyone a chance to talk, asking clarification questions, eliciting opinions from each other, and so forth).

- You may wish to use a very simple and informal grading system for this, perhaps just "good" "okay" and an occasional "not so great" or "didn't try." (It is very hard to give precise participation grades.)

Notebooks

We think it is a good idea to ask students to keep a notebook of things they learn during the SEP program, and if you ask students to keep notebooks, you may wish to collect the notebooks two or three times during the course and assign some kind of grade (perhaps just "good", "okay", "needs more work", or "+/ok/-"). This reinforces the importance of the notebooks, and also gives you one additional assessment measure to balance out your package. Note that this measure tends to reward effort.

- Be careful not to over-emphasize the importance of this grade or students may waste a lot of time stuffing notebooks and re-copying them to make them pretty.
- If other written work is assigned, grades could also be given to some of these assignments.
- You might collect and look over students' notebooks once or twice during the program, both to give feedback and to reinforce to students the importance of their keeping a notebook.

Final small-group examinations

Since the SEP emphasizes speaking and listening practice in groups, we suggest that your "final examination" consist of a small group discussion task in which students discuss a topic drawn from those covered previously in the program. They are awarded points based on participation; groups are also awarded points for good discussion. This kind of final test will encourage students to take daily discussion activities more seriously.

When:

- 1) The test should probably be scheduled for one morning during the last week of the program, using as much of the morning class time as is necessary to allow each group an interview time.
- 2) Groups will come into your class one at a time for the test. Each group should be allocated about 15-20 minutes.
- 3) When making your schedule, be sure to allow some free time (probably about 10 minutes) between test sessions so that you can take notes, the new group has a chance to settle in, and so forth.

Who: Each teacher tests one class, probably her/his own homeroom class.

Before the test:

- 1) Explain to students how you will "score" the test. Tell students that you are looking for how they participate in discussions both as individuals and as a group. You hope:
 - that everyone will try to contribute to the conversation by asking questions, responding to questions, stating opinions, and so forth;
 - that everyone will be given a chance to contribute; i.e. that students will encourage each other to share opinions, and that one or two people won't do all the talking;

- that the group will genuinely discuss the topic; i.e. that student's will listen to each other's ideas, clarify, explain, and so forth.
- 2) Explain the test format to students. Better yet, walk them through a dry run, perhaps toward the middle of the program. (This should help lower test anxiety, and make students take in-class discussion practice more seriously.)
 - 3) Before the test day, group students and assign them a time to arrive for the test.

Designing test discussion topics

- 1) Before the test, make a list of discussion topics and write them on slips of paper.
- 2) The discussion topics should be drawn from those covered in all courses -- i.e. the Daily Life, People, Learning, and My Country and Yours courses. (This will reinforce the feeling that what happens in each course daily is important.)
- 3) Discussion topics may be written either as questions (Ex: "Which household tasks should be performed by husbands, and which by wives?" "What is the best age for children to start learning a foreign language?") or as tasks (Ex: "Decide whether university students should be encouraged to take part-time jobs.").
- 4) Gear the difficulty of discussion topics to the speaking skill level of your students. Be especially careful not to make them too hard.

Administering the test:

- 1) Try to keep the testing atmosphere as relaxed and friendly as possible.
- 2) At the beginning of the test, have the group draw a discussion topic. (You might also allow them to draw 2 or 3, and then pick the one they like best.) Having students draw discussion topics from a hat or something else may help create a lighter game-like atmosphere.
- 3) Have the group discuss their chosen topic.
- 4) As you listen to students' discussion, make a few brief notes about each student's performance. Try to note one or two things you can praise the student for, and one or two suggestions for how she/he could try to improve.
- 5) After the test, you might write a brief note to each student giving feedback about the discussion, as well as indicating the pass/fail grade.

Individual interviews

A final interview is a good evaluation technique because it reinforces the importance of building communicative speaking skills. Interviews might be conducted by the homeroom teacher of each class, or perhaps planned by the team as a whole.

- You might schedule these in the afternoons in the final days of the program.
- Let participants know in advance how you will conduct the interview and how you will score it. It is important that you grade on those things which you stress in class. In other words, if you have stressed communication in class, you should not score on the basis of how many grammar mistakes an interviewee makes.
- It is generally best if you prepare some kind of grading sheet you can fill out during the interview. This makes grading easier and helps you remember what you should be looking for.

III. Other issues related to grades and testing

The test anxiety issue

Tests of any kind tend to generate a great deal of stress among students in China, including middle school teachers like those in the SEP. In fact, test anxiety can become such a problem that concern over tests and grades becomes the overwhelming preoccupation for students and drives away their ability to focus on anything else.

1) Let students know early in the program that it will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and that all students who participate and make a sincere effort will pass. Students may assume that they need to reach a certain level of language skill in order to pass, so you may need to assure lower level students that you are primarily interested in progress.

2) It also helps a lot if students become familiar with test procedures well in advance of the final test, especially if they have a chance to walk through it. This should help reassure students that the final test is not too hard, and reduces fear of the unknown.

Giving "fail" grades

In general it is relatively rare for students in China to be given failing grades, and for participants in the SEP -- middle school English teachers -- the loss of face would be quite high. So, on the whole you should try to avoid giving failing grades. A few thoughts:

1) You may well have some students whose English is really awful, and find it hard to imagine giving them a passing grade, especially if a little voice in your head keeps reminding you that they are English teachers. However, if they make an effort, we would suggest you still pass them. Keep in mind that the best yardstick to use in assessing a student's English skill is progress from whatever her/his starting point was, not how well she/he compares with classmates. (Otherwise the dice are loaded against those who had fewer previous chances to study English.)

2) If you feel a student is headed toward a failing grade, talk with someone in the administration at your host school as early as possible, certainly before any final examination. This alerts them to the problem before it is too late, and allows you the benefit of advice from a local perspective.

Things To Bring For Teaching

It is not necessary for you to bring a lot of teaching material to the SEP -- the Toolkit contains quite a lot. However, a small well chosen stock of other materials for teaching and reference may be of real value, especially if before your arrival in China your team can communicate and make at least tentative decisions as to:

- who will teach which courses;
- who will give which talks and presentations for the afternoon "My Country and Yours" course.

Below are some suggestions as to kinds of things that may be useful to bring.

Pictures and other visual aids: One of the best ways you can prepare for the program is by collecting a good set of pictures to use in class. These liven up a talk, lesson, or presentation, and also make them easier for students with weak listening comprehension skills to follow. Ideally pictures should be reasonably large, and you may want to mount them, laminate them, put them in plastic sheet protectors, or do something else so that they better survive handling. Types of pictures which directly relate to lessons in the SEP Curriculum include:

- Your family, both immediate and extended. Also your best friends.
- Your life story, including baby pictures and childhood.
- Your hometown and home region.
- Different occupations.
- Typical Western foods and meals; a food group pyramid.
- Typical Western clothing, preferably with a range of styles and colors.
- Your hobbies.
- General pictures of typical Western recreational activities and sports.
- Children and different aspects of child raising.
- Typical chores for young people (mowing the lawn, washing dishes, etc.)
- Weddings. General, your own, or other people you know.
- Schools, clinics, hospitals--both nice and not so nice.
- Holidays and holiday activities.
- Famous Westerners.

You obviously can't come with a full set of pictures of each of these things, but the more the better. Even having one or two pictures related to a topic allows you to take a nice little break for show and tell break during class.

Movies: Many schools have VCRs, VCD, or DVD players and you may be able to show videos at night or in the afternoons, so you might bring one or two. In choosing videos, keep the following in mind: 1) It is best if the dialogue is not too fast. Older films are sometimes better in this regard. 2) Simple plots are easier to follow. Participants in the program are adults, but will have trouble understanding English language dialog. Movies with lots of action and visual humor are good. 3) The content of the film may be interpreted as a reflection of your values, so choose carefully.

Some previously successful films: Lion King, Iron Will, Jungle Book, Jumanji, Helen Keller (Chinese textbooks have stories about her), Beethoven, The Land Before Time, Little

Women, Sound of Music, Jurassic Park, The Great Panda Adventure, Sarah Plain and Tall, Karate Kid (I, II, or III). Titanic is a favorite, but long. Also old TV shows like I Love Lucy.

Note: Sometimes videos are impounded by customs for awhile. Also, videotape machines in China use the PAL system (North America uses NTSC.). However, many schools have at least one multi-system machine that can also show NTSC videos. DVDs are available very inexpensively in China. These can be played in English with or without Chinese subtitles.

Music/ CDs:

Music radically enhances the general fun of the SEP. The students love to sing and dance. The school may or may not be able to provide you with a CD player, but it is usually not difficult to find an inexpensive one to buy. This can be donated to the school or given away at the end of the program. Getting small, portable speakers can also be helpful.

- 1) Folk songs, Christmas music, Sound of Music, your favorites
- 2) Dance music: Hokey Pokey, line, swing, and square dancing

Other:

- 1) Realia from daily life, such as money, menus, social security cards, driver's license. Also a few small interesting knick-knacks you could use for guessing games.
- 2) Glossy ads for clothing and electronics from Sunday papers
- 3) Small books, Reader's Digests, Guideposts for library tables. (Not "Our Daily Bread")
- 2) Big maps of your home city, state, province, country.
- 3) Tape or putty for mounting pictures, maps, etc. on walls.

English teaching reference books: You don't need to bring a library with you, but it may help to have one or two resource books of oral skills activities. (You might arrange with other team members to each bring different books.) Below are several books highly recommended by previous teachers.

Bailey, Kathleen and Lance Savage, eds. New Ways in Teaching Speaking. (TESOL) A great grab bag of speaking activities.

Klippel, Friederike. Keep Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching. (Cambridge University Press) A large, excellent collection of conversation activities, neatly laid out in easy-to-use format.

Sion, Christopher (ed). Recipes For Tired Teachers. (Addison Wesley) A grab bag of activities for speaking, listening, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Also lots of games. Well packaged and easy to use. More Recipes For Tired Teachers is now also available.

Ur, Penny. Discussions That Work: Task Centered Fluency Practice. (Cambridge U Press) A clear introduction to using discussion in class; also contains many good discussion activities.

Ur, Penny and Andrew Wright. Five-Minute Activities: A Resource Book of Short Activities. (Cambridge University Press) Lots of activities that would make good warm-ups for either morning or afternoon sessions.

The ESL Miscellany (revised second edition). (Pro Lingua Associates) A collection of information about the English language and American culture, helpful as a resource for preparing talks on US culture.

Books To Consider Reading Before You Come

Essential Reading:

- Snow, Don. English Teaching as Christian Mission. (Herald Press) A discussion of the various ways in which English teaching can be appropriately understood as a form of Christian service and mission. *Highly recommended.*

About interacting with Chinese people: This book is recommend above all others for Americans planning to go to China:

- Hu Wenzhong & Cornelius Grove. Encountering the Chinese: A Guide for Americans, 3rd ed. (Intercultural Press) The best general introduction for Westerners preparing to go to China. Lots of practical information on how to interact with Chinese people. *Highly recommended.*

About language teaching: If you are not a language teacher by profession and want to learn more about language teaching, you might read one of the following books.

- Brown, Douglas. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. (Prentice Hall Regents). Excellent book on language teaching. Covers virtually all the issues, yet is quite readable. (Slightly more academic.)
- Snow, Don. More than a Native Speaker: An Introduction for Volunteers Teaching English Abroad. (TESOL) An introduction to language teaching written expressly for volunteer language teachers working and living abroad. (A bit more novice-friendly.)

About the Christian church in China: You will no doubt be called on after your return home to give your impressions of the Christian church in China. Listed below are some books that provide good background information.

- Brown, Thompson. Christianity in the People's Republic of China. (John Knox Press) A brief readable introduction to the history of Protestant Christianity in China.
- Covell, Ralph. The Liberating Gospel in China. (Baker Book House) Recent book about Christianity among China's minority peoples. Well written and interesting.
- Towery, Britt. Christianity in Today's China: Taking Root Downward, Bearing Fruit Upward, 4th edition. (1stBooks Library) Good general introduction to the church in China; also contains province-by-province introduction to the church and other interesting appendices.
- Whyte, Bob. Unfinished Encounter: China and Christianity. (Collins Fount Paperbacks) A general introduction to the history of Christianity in China; more detailed than Brown.

Packing List

I General tips

1) Try not to overpack. Airline travel within China limits luggage weight to 44 pounds, and costs for excess weight must be paid by the person who brings the luggage. Also, the entire team and their luggage often need to fit in a school's small van, for a trip which may be lengthy. Finally, some teams may travel in trains with no luggage compartments. So please try to travel light. A good rule of thumb is not to have more luggage than you can move by yourself.

2) You can now get most kinds of goods in China, but they may not have your exact brand, size or flavor. If you have a special problem, need or desire (big feet, a craving for decaffeinated tea, an obsession with Oral-B toothbrushes), bring what you need in order to be sure.

II. Things to consider bringing

Medications and Health

You must bring with you any medications which you know you will need. Your particular medication may be available in China, but you cannot expect to locate it immediately, especially if you do not know the Chinese name for it. Failure to bring necessary medication may turn a small problem into a major crisis.

Disposable syringes (for the cautious)

Pain relievers (aspirin available)

Diarrhea medicine

Rub-on or spray insect repellent (if you use it. Various mosquito nets, coils, mat-type devices, etc. available in China.)

A home medical handbook. It is handy if one person on the team has such a handbook, especially one written for people going overseas -- it's nice to have information in your own language.

Basic first-aid stuff.

Cold and cough medicine.

Couples may want to bring their own contraceptives.

Clothing

1) Be prepared for weather that is very hot and humid. You may also wind up washing your clothes by hand in a sink, so light clothing that dries quickly is nice.

2) Suggested dress for teaching: Women: Blouses with skirts or pants; dresses. Men: Long pants and short-sleeve shirts. Dress should be slightly conservative; one does not normally teach in tank-tops, and shorts, and low-cut sun dresses on women aren't a good idea. (Outside class T-shirts and shorts may be okay.)

Other things you might want to bring (if you use them)

Real coffee and production apparatus. Instant coffee available. (for addicts)

Dental floss (almost unheard of in China)

Products like deodorant, Vaseline, sun cream (if you use them)

Contact lens solutions, apparatus (available in larger cities)

Nice letter paper (envelopes are standardized in China, so get envelopes there)

Games you might want to play with student visitors (Uno, bingo, Scrabble, etc.)

Stamps (many Chinese are avid stamp collectors)

Digital camera (developing is available in many cities and is less expensive than at home. They can also save your pictures to a CD very cheaply.)

Slide film (Picture film is readily available, but slide film is rare, so if you take slides bring a supply of film and plan to develop them at home.)

Emergency money (US\$ travelers checks are safer, cash is easier to change)

Notebook computer with accessories. (E-mail access is now available in most Chinese cities, and you may have access to the net at the post office or some kind of net-café, but you probably won't have time to get net access for your own computer.)

Do Not Bring:

Electric appliances that won't work on 220 volts. (You may bring a converter if you wish, but be sure it has a plug which fits the Chinese receptacles, and be forewarned that currency converters are not 100% reliable.)

Suggestions From One Who Has Been There

Doug Reeves²

* Paragraphs marked with an asterisk have been updated by Amity

I. Preparing for the program

Chopsticks: Start going to Chinese restaurants and learn to use chopsticks. You might even buy some and use them for family meals.

Chinese eating customs: Read a book on Chinese customs and etiquette. I have seen a few volunteers who were surprised -- even vocally upset -- that food is served "family style" and that everyone uses their chopsticks to serve themselves from communal dishes. Loudly announcing that this practice is "unsanitary" is not gracious. Be prepared to try a little of some very unusual foods and don't be surprised if your host places what he regards as the best morsels directly on your plate. Even if you find it unappetizing, please taste some of everything. (You can generally leave it after tasting politely.)

Chinese language and language learning: Learn at least a few words of Chinese (Putonghua, also called Mandarin). This will help you make friends and create a good impression. If you have the opportunity, you might spend a few hours in an "immersion" Chinese program so that you get a sense of how frustrating your class will be for your Chinese students. You will want to start speaking English, and your teacher will insist that you continue to speak a language that you barely understand. After 45 minutes you will be utterly exhausted.

You would be insulted and upset if your Chinese teacher thought that the way to communicate with you was to speak Putonghua at a louder volume, insinuating that you are an idiot because you don't understand what is obvious to the teacher, or speak to you as they would to a child. Please think about these feelings when you engage in your own teaching practices.

Telephone credit cards: Telephone long distance cards may work in the hotels in Nanjing and Beijing, but do not count on them in the more rural cities. Fortunately, internet cafes ("coffee bars") are available in most locations. You may find it convenient to get a Chinese telephone card. These are issued in a variety of denominations (100 yuan, etc.) and can be inserted into many public telephones. They can be used for local, inter-province, and international calls.*

Travel kits: Carry a "travel kit" for when you are in more remote locations or out on the local economy. This kit should include some medicines (aspirin, immodium or the anti-diarrhea medicine of your choice), a bottle of drinking water to take a pill, a pair of clean chopsticks, and a small roll of toilet paper. If you require hypodermic needles, be certain to take your own. Take sufficient quantities of antibiotics, cold pills, pain medication, and anti-diarrhea medication for every day of your trip.

Health and physical shape: Get into good physical shape. Please don't expect this to be a tourist trip. You should expect to do a lot of walking and perhaps bicycling during your trip in China. Although taxis may be available, they may be beyond the means of your hosts to pay for, and your hosts may regard it as impolite for you to pay for the taxi or to travel alone. Therefore,

² Doug Reeves taught with the SEP in Chuzhou, Anhui in 1996. These excerpts from his report represent his personal views rather than official Amity policy, but are included because they offer a great deal of sage and practical advice.

you should have a good pair of walking shoes and expect to do a lot of walking. (Break walking shoes in before coming to China. People who used their China experience to break in new shoes were quite uncomfortable.)

You should also expect to climb a lot of stairs. Our rooms were located on the fourth floor of a building, and the elevator was out of service more than half of the time; we had meetings in office buildings on the seventh floor and elevators were either unavailable or out of service. Loud complaints to the desk clerk, elevator attendant, or other people were unlikely to make the electricity or elevator return to working order. You must be able to walk a lot, climb a lot of stairs, go without air-conditioning and hot water (although these are sometimes available), and generally live in a more simple way than that to which you are accustomed. However difficult your living and working conditions in China, it is good to realize that these will be more comfortable than those of your hosts, and any complaints you consider making should be tempered by that knowledge.

If you have any medical conditions which are potentially serious, consider a different place to serve. We were located some hours away from the nearest modern medical facility, and a minor emergency in the States can easily become a major problem in China. It is also difficult to meet special dietary requirements in China. If you require a salt-free, vegetarian, low fat or other special diet, it may be difficult to accept Chinese hospitality. MSG is also used widely. (Many sites provide a special dining room and special meal arrangements for the volunteers, so dietary requests can be dealt with when eating at the "home" base.) *

A word about age is appropriate here -- volunteers in their 60s and 70s have been tremendously effective in their mission and have enjoyed their experience. Younger volunteers who were significantly overweight or otherwise unprepared for the rigors of China had a less successful experience. The issue of physical condition is not one of age, but of preparation.

With regard to vaccinations and preventive medication, consult your own physician. Some of the information published by the Centers for Disease Control is quite dated, but you can call them directly for the latest information on your destination. You can also contact your local Health Department which handles vaccinations for overseas travel. Hepatitis remains a threat in many areas in China. *

Weather: Expect it to be very hot during most of your stay in China -- in the 90s much of the time. You may have air-conditioning in your rooms (although power outages may mean that it doesn't always work), but it probably won't be available in classrooms. Dress appropriately, take a break at noon like the Chinese do, and drink plenty of fluids -- in fact, drink another cup of water at every chance you get.

English teaching: Unless you are an experienced teacher of adults, you should consider taking a class or reading a book on how to teach English as a second language to adult students. At the very least, spend some time talking to experienced ESL teachers.

One of the more common complaints I heard "back channel" from Chinese students who would never express themselves openly, but who did express themselves privately to other Chinese, was that American teachers too often treated Chinese adult students as children. In many cases, our students are teachers, many of whom have more teaching experience than their American teachers. The American teachers who had experience primarily as elementary school teachers as well as those who had no teaching experience appeared to have some difficulty in this regard. Some of the children's songs, pedantic expressions, condescending tones of voice, and general patterns of behavior were inappropriate for adults. In any teaching situation, you will never go wrong by treating students with respect and as adults.

If you have a chance while in China, look at the textbooks used in middle school English classes: Junior English for China (1-3) and Senior English for China (1-3).

Gifts: Don't spend a lot of money on gifts. Some of the travel guides you may have read place excessive emphasis on the exchange of gifts and the Chinese practice of *guanxi*. This is only relevant to business connections, and that is not your purpose in China. Expensive gifts not only place the recipients in the uncomfortable position of feeling that they must reciprocate, but also make things difficult for other teachers who may not have your economic means. The best gift is your time, and after that the most important tangible gift will be a photograph of you with your students. For the equivalent of a few US cents per student you can give a personal and meaningful gift -- and that is sufficient. (You might also leave behind teaching supplies you brought with you.)

Christianity: As you already know, it is not permissible in China to proselytize, and the Chinese Christian Council with which Amity is associated is committed to the principles of "self-propagation" and "self-support." There remains to this day resentment toward aspects of experience with Western missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries, coming as they did in the context of imperialist expansion by the Western powers.

However, you are most welcome to respond to student questions about religion, about your religious beliefs, and about religious practices. Expect those questions to be quite blunt, such as "Why do you close your eyes when you pray?" or "Do you read your Bible every day?" or "Does your God really determine everything that will happen to you in advance?" or "Why does your God allow terrible earthquakes and floods to happen in my country?" Respond to these questions honestly and clearly. The fact that we respect the independence of the Chinese church does not mean that we are in any way ashamed of our faith and convictions.

If you do attend a local church, do so with the knowledge of your hosts. Your hosts feel responsible for your safety and may become upset if you go off by yourself for sightseeing or other activities. It would be particularly embarrassing for them and the teaching program if you were to become involved in any unauthorized religious meetings.

If you would like to give money to the local church, do so discretely, quietly and privately, placing cash -- not checks -- in the box which is usually at the front or back of the sanctuary. Do not give money to the pastor or parishioners. If you are in doubt as to how to make a gift, the most appropriate things would be to make a gift either to the Amity Foundation or to your denomination's international program.

Spending money: Your lodging, food and transportation are usually arranged for by your sponsoring group and Amity prior to your departure for China. You will need extra cash for additional school supplies on site, possible excess luggage weight charges, and personal purchases. \$10-15 per day should be quite sufficient and will cover unexpected situations if they arise. Most places you visit are not prepared to take credit cards and many will not take traveler's checks, or will charge as much as a \$10 US per transaction service fee to cash a traveler's check. When you do exchange money into Chinese currency, the best exchange rates are in the banks. The airport "official exchanges" are less favorable. Avoid the street people who offer to "change money" for you. *

Passport: Make a photocopy of your passport, and carry it with you in a place separate from your passport. (This facilitates replacement if you lose your passport or it gets stolen.) Also make a copy of your airline tickets. *

II. Daily Life Tips

Take breaks: Chinese hosts are gracious in the extreme. After an exhausting week of classes, sometimes involving 12 hours per day of activities, they may arrange a full weekend, starting at 6:00 AM on Saturday, to see local and regional attractions. It is reasonable, and may even be necessary, to politely decline some of these offers. Your first obligation is to be an effective teacher, and to do this you need rest and recuperation. Ask your team leader to extend your appreciation and a polite but clear excuse. Expect that you may have to do this more than once, as the declining of an invitation is frequently regarded as the polite prelude to an acceptance or an indication that you would like to engage in another activity, if only the host can think of one. Therefore you must be clear that you need rest and do not intend to engage in any activity. Of course, having declined an invitation on the basis that you plan to rest, it would be impolite to accept another invitation or to engage in personal sight-seeing.

Moderate consumption: The quality of Chinese food is exceptional and the quantity can be as well. Gracious Chinese hosts expect to serve you more than you can consume. Therefore it is wise to get into the habit of taking very small portions of everything. This is particularly true for alcoholic beverages. It is entirely appropriate to decline alcohol altogether, and you can propose perfectly suitable banquet and dinner toasts with tea, water, or soft drinks. Should you choose to consume alcohol, moderation is essential, particularly in the summer heat or in higher elevations, where the effect of alcohol can be particularly pronounced. Add to that the effect of fatigue and dietary changes, and it is wise to make moderation the rule.

Team leaders: In any group of people some contention is possible. Disputes can occur over teaching techniques and assignment of responsibilities. Reasonable people can certainly differ over such issues, but it must be made clear well in advance that team leaders are assigned for a reason, and they need the cooperation and support of their team members. Volunteers who insist that their own teaching experience, personal convictions, age, inability to change, or other individual characteristics prevent them from cooperating with the team leader should probably consider other avenues of service.

Admitting ignorance: You may be treated as an "expert" in a range of fields, and this status can be so gratifying to one's ego that it becomes tempting to fake answers. This places other English teachers in the uncomfortable position of contradicting their colleagues if asked the same question. Part of our Christian witness should be humility and honesty, and it is entirely reasonable to say "I don't know" when you are asked questions about history, economics, science, linguistics, or other fields which your background does not prepare you to answer.

Relationships: It is entirely natural to feel lonely and wish for companionship of the opposite sex. However, it is not appropriate for teachers to develop romantic relationships with students.

Travel books: Be sure travel books you read about China are current. As China is changing so rapidly, any book without the current year's copyright date is almost certainly obsolete in many details.

Political discussions: In China there are a number of political topics which are sensitive and which you would be wise to avoid. These include Tiananmen, Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and human rights. Discussion of these topics may be offensive to your hosts, and as guests such offense is best avoided.

Little Tips for a Happy Life in China (in no particular order)

Don Snow

Crime: China now has more crime than it did a few years ago, especially theft. Watch your wallet/purse.

Traffic safety: Several of Amity's worst medical emergencies have been bicycle accidents. If you are not a good cyclist, crowded streets in China are not a good place to practice. As you will soon notice, drivers and bikers often only leave paper-thin margins of error when they speed past you. The improving economy has led to many new automobile drivers on the roads with little driving experience.

Eating on the street: There is a lot of good food there, but be a bit cautious. Food that goes directly from the wok or grill to you is generally safe; food that sits cold for a long time or is served on poorly washed dishes is more dicey.

Water: 1) Boil your water before drinking. In all but the most remote areas Chinese also boil all water before drinking it, so you don't need to worry about water served to you. Boiling water for 5 minutes is recommended by some medical authorities, although most people in China just make sure the water comes to a boil and still manage to get by. 2) **Be sure to drink lots of water during hot weather!** 3) Brushing your teeth in boiled water, while not absolutely necessary, does give you additional protection from giardia, an intestinal disease.

Food: Peel fruit or wash it very carefully; cook vegetables.

Toilet paper: Be sure to carry some with you; most public toilets don't provide any.

Diarrhea: First day: Try avoiding food for a day, or only eating bland food like starches. Bring antidiarrheal medication like Immodium with you and follow the directions. Make sure you don't get dehydrated. If it goes on, see a doctor.

People who shout "Hello": Either smile and say "hello" back or simply ignore them. As annoying as this can be, it is usually not evil in intent. They are usually just showing off their English skills.

Cleaning apartments: A few of you may be housed in apartments of Amity teachers who work at the school during the regular academic year. If so, please take care of things and clean the apartment before you leave. Unfortunately, in the past summer teams have occasionally left apartments a terrible mess.

Promises: Some past summer teachers who teach in schools where there are Amity teachers during the regular academic year have encouraged summer program participants to make contact with these Amity teachers, even promising that these teachers would be happy to spend time with them. Keep in mind that regular-year Amity teachers may not have much additional time and energy for your students -- they have a great many students of their own.

Frequently Asked Questions About The Protestant Church in China

Judy Sutterlin³

I. Church Members and Others Who Attend

How many Christians are there in China? How many belong to the registered churches?

How many belong to unregistered churches? Because many congregations do not have membership lists, it is difficult to know the exact number of Christians in China or the comparative number belonging to registered and unregistered churches. There are at least fifteen million Protestant Christians and probably more.

Is it only old people who go to church? No. Although many worshipers are older, large numbers of younger people also attend and declare their faith in baptism. Some congregations also have Sunday School classes for children of Christian families.

Are the majority of believers women? There are more women than men in most of the congregations in China. The percentage of women is generally over 60% and there are a few areas where it may be as high as 90%.

Are any Chinese intellectuals involved in or interested in the church? Some intellectuals are believers and church members, and some, including some well-known poets and scholars, accept the Christian world view but are not members of the church.

II. Church Growth and Evangelism

Is the church growing? Yes. Though the percentage of new believers varies quite a bit from one area to another, growth is occurring and in some areas the rate is very high. In addition, new churches are constantly being organized and built.

Who does evangelism? What form does it take and where it does happen? Chinese Christians are encouraged to demonstrate Christ's love in the way they live, and most evangelism happens in one-to-one contacts. Evangelism also occurs when non-believers come to churches, either invited by friends or relatives or drawn by a special service or religious event. By law foreigners are not allowed to proselytize.

What is required to become a baptized member of the church? What form of baptism is used? Most China Christian Council churches require new believers to attend worship for at least a year, attend a class for new believers and be questioned about their faith by the church leaders. New believers can usually choose the method of baptism -- immersion or sprinkling.

III. TSPM/CCC

What is the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)? The term "three-self" refers to self-support, self-government and self-propagation, and the TSPM is a movement within the Protestant church in China to promote these principles. It began in the 1950's in order to promote the idea that the Chinese Church is not dependent on or controlled by foreign mission bodies,

³ Edited for length and updated in March 2002 by Don Snow

that it is possible to be both a Christian and a good patriotic citizen, and that Christians should identify themselves with the aspirations of the Chinese people.

What is the China Christian Council (CCC)? Founded in 1980, it aims to be the umbrella organization for all Protestant Christian churches in China and seeks to unite Chinese Christians around their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It works to provide for theological education and for publication of the Bible, hymn books and other religious literature. It encourages the exchange of information among local churches in evangelism, pastoral work and administration. It has formulated a church order for local churches, and seeks to continue to develop friendly relations with churches overseas. The CCC and the TSPM are known as the "two national Christian bodies" (liang hui).

Who are the leaders of the CCC and the TSPM? The new leaders, elected at the Seventh National Christian Conference in Beijing (May 2002) are Rev. Cao Shengjie (President and Acting General Secretary, CCC) and Presbyter Ji Jianhong (Chairperson and Acting Secretary General, TSPM).

The Chinese church has been described as "post-denominational." What does this mean? Are there still differences between CCC churches? Denominations went out of existence in 1958 under the influence of the "Great Leap Forward" and the lack of financial resources. However, some differences related to past traditions are still apparent. For example, in some churches the style of worship is more liturgical, in others it is more in the free church tradition. One congregation may even offer several different styles of worship. (Some groups like the Seventh Day Adventists, the True Jesus Church and the Little Flock try to maintain a more distinct identity, but in many places even these are part of a TSPM/CCC related church.) On the whole, the strategy of Chinese Christians has been to try to join around what they have in common to be one body, while respecting differences within that body and allowing for differences in theology and in liturgical styles.

IV. TSPM/CCC Relations to Other Christian Groups

How do the Protestant and Catholic churches in China relate? Protestant and Catholic Christianity are separate bodies, who respect each others rights as religious believers. Except for cooperation in proffering suggestions to the government about religious policy to further respect for and protection of the rights of all religious believers, they have had very little contact so far.

How is the TSPM/CCC involved in international ecumenical relations? The TSPM/CCC recognizes and values the fact that it is a part of the Body of Christ which includes churches and believers around the world. The CCC is a member of the World Council of Churches and welcomes relationships with any church organizations that demonstrate their willingness to relate as equal partners with of mutual respect for one another.

What kind of contact is possible between foreigners living in China and local Christians? There is no legal restriction in contacts made at worship or in informal contacts as friends. Most Amity teachers find contacts with church members limited only by the language barrier and individual choices. In most places, however, local Chinese are not permitted to attend services or religious gatherings organized and led by foreigners.

V. Registration of Churches

What is the difference between a registered and an unregistered church? A registered congregation has chosen to comply with the government regulations for registration of places of worship and has met six general requirements. If anyone tries to infringe upon their rights under the law, they have legal grounds to seek rectification of the situation.

What are the six requirements for registration? 1-2) The congregation must have a fixed place and name. 3) There must be citizens who are religious believers regularly participating in religious activities. 4) They must have a management organization composed of citizens who are religious believers. 5) They must have persons meeting the requirements of the particular religious group to lead religious services. 6) They must have their own legal source of income.

Why are there still unregistered churches? Some congregations disagree theologically with any kind of civil registration for churches and therefore choose not to seek registration. Others are strongly committed to a narrowly defined set of theological beliefs and are not willing to have fellowship with other Christians who do not fully share their convictions. Additionally there are congregations which have applied for registration and are awaiting approval, and some which have applied and been denied because they do not meet one or more of the requirements above or because local officials have unfairly denied the registration. (There is a process to appeal the denial of an application to register.)

What are "house churches"? This term is unclear because both "home meeting points" and "meeting points" are often described as "house churches." They usually do not have their own ordained pastor and rely on lay leadership for most of their activities. A "meeting point" has its own building, while a "home meeting point" meets in a private home. Many Christian groups start as home meeting points, grow into meetings points, and from there sometimes become churches with a church building and pastor.

Are there registered "meeting points" and "home meeting points"? Yes. In fact the majority of registered Christian bodies are meeting points. Many home meeting points operate as adjuncts (like Bible study groups) of registered meeting points or churches, so home meeting points don't need to register in most provinces.

What is the "underground church"? A more appropriate description might be "churches which chose to remain unregistered," which usually means they do not relate to the local Christian Council or TSPM. "Underground church" is often a misnomer as some of these congregations are quite public.

Are there registered churches that are not a part of the TSPM and the CCC? Yes. Registration does not require a congregation to join either the TSPM or the CCC.

Do unregistered and registered churches work together? If so, why? If not, why not? In some areas individual congregations have worked well together, but in many cases unregistered congregations prefer not to work with registered ones. Attitudes of individual congregations may be rooted in theological differences, misunderstandings, or mistrust.

VI. The Rights of Christians

Are Christians persecuted in China? The Chinese Constitution and laws provide for the right of all citizens to hold their own religious beliefs and to engage in regular worship and other "normal" religious activities. However, religious policy and its implementation in specific areas are two different things. Interpretation of the policy by local government officials may vary, and they do not all equally abide by or enforce the rights upheld by the policy. In some areas, cases of harassment, imprisonment and other kinds of persecution do occur. Church leaders respond to these on a case by case basis, working to have believers' legal rights honored. Rights are most easily protected for members of registered churches because their legal status helps in appealing to higher governmental authorities for help in ending any illegal infringements.

Are Christians held back in their career opportunities? Certain kinds of jobs require party membership, and because Christian faith and party membership are incompatible, a Christian would not be eligible for such positions. (To keep this in perspective, note that only 4-5% of the total population are party members.) In other cases, bosses may initiate or encourage discrimination, but illegal actions can be challenged.

VII. Elements of Worship in TSPM/CCC Churches

What are sermons in TSPM/CCC churches like? Sermons are generally conservative expositions of a Biblical text, focusing on topics like salvation, ethics or seasonal themes. They encourage believers to help society as part of their witness to Christ's love. (Being both a good Christian and a patriotic citizen are encouraged in much the same way as in our countries.)

What are public prayers in the church like? Traditional prayers of the church are used as well as prayers offered freely from the heart of the person praying. There is no prescribed form and no restriction.

When and how often is the Lord's Supper celebrated? This varies from one congregation to another. Churches with ordained pastors choose freely how often to celebrate the Lord's Supper and often follow the original tradition of that congregation. Those without ordained pastors wait until one can visit and lead that service. The same is true for services of baptism.

VIII. Bibles And Other Christian Resources

What can I tell people who want to bring or send Bibles to Christians in China? Bibles are being published in China. The smuggling of Bibles from abroad engages Christians in an illegal activity which tarnishes the witness of the church and generates suspicions that all Christians engage in illegal acts. Smuggled Bibles can be confiscated, and possession of them also put recipients at risk as participants in an illegal act.

The best way to help provide Bibles is with contributions to the United Bible Societies, Amity or other groups cooperating with the CCC in the printing and distributing of Bibles. Contributions (designated for the printing and distribution of Bibles in China) can be made through the American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, or through Rev. Bao Jiayuan, China Christian Council, 17 Da Jian Yin Street, Nanjing, 210029, China.

How many Bibles are printed in China? Since 1987 the China Christian Council has published more than 28 million Bibles in China (at the Amity Printing Company), and is continuing to publish several million each year. Before the Amity Printing Company was established, an additional three million Bibles were printed on other presses.

How can a person get one of these Bibles? Bibles can be purchased at most churches. The costs of Amity Bibles are subsidized, hence relatively low. The churches obtain the Bibles from distribution centers throughout China. Even churches who prefer not to work through the CCC can obtain these Bibles through East Gate Ministries.

Is the Chinese Bible printed in China different from those available overseas? The Chinese Bibles printed in Nanjing are the traditional Union Version translation. This translation is also still used by most Chinese congregations in all parts of the world, including Hong Kong. Though other recent Chinese translations exist, this is the one most accepted by the majority of believers in China. It is printed in both the complex characters, familiar to the older generation, and in the simplified characters, which the younger generation can read, mostly the latter.

Does the Amity Printing Company print any other resources for the churches? They also regularly print hymnals and other Christian literature for use in the churches and for use by individual Christians. These materials are made available through churches.

Can foreigners give Christian books and resources to Chinese Christians? There is generally little concern over an individual gift, but foreigners are not allowed to distribute printed religious materials without prior permission. (This prevents the distributing of materials whose theological grounding is questionable.)

IX. Leadership in the Church

What do Chinese Christians see as their greatest challenge? Many feel the greatest challenge is leadership development. There are relatively few ordained pastors to shepherd increasing numbers of new believers. In Zhejiang Province, for example, there is just one ordained pastor per 10,000 believers.

Why is there such a shortage of ordained leadership? This is in part a result of the closing of churches and seminaries during the Cultural Revolution. During that time no training of leaders could take place. It is also due to the rapid growth in the number of believers in recent times. In addition, many areas are slow in ordaining today's younger seminary graduates.

What are the ramifications of the scarcity of trained leadership? With lack of adequately trained leadership, strange beliefs, heresies and even cults can develop, especially in the countryside. Guidance of well-trained leaders can help in discernment.

What is the Chinese Church doing to develop new leaders? The CCC and regional and provincial Christian Councils have opened 18 seminaries and Bible colleges since 1980, and a few theological students are also sent overseas for further training. In addition to the regular course of study training future pastors, there are many places which also offer lay training courses. The Chinese Church relies heavily on its lay leadership.

How are the newly trained leaders being integrated into the work of the church? Sometimes there are very dedicated older pastors working hand in hand with enthusiastic younger pastors. On the other hand, sometimes committed older leaders have trouble truly sharing positions of power with the younger generation of leaders. Sometimes, as both generations have difficulty accepting each other's vision for the work of the church, the generation gap in the church leadership can be a difficult and sensitive issue. In some areas the younger leaders are able to serve with the natural enthusiasm they bring. In other areas they can be disheartened by delays in achieving the level of participation they would like to have.

Does the government choose the church leaders? In general church leaders are chosen by the churches. However, in some areas the CCC has experienced pressure from local governmental officials in making appointments. In 1996 a Religious Affairs Bureau official from Henan Province wrote an article (printed in the Chinese church magazine, **Tian Feng**) criticizing any government appointment of church workers as illegal and harmful, pointing out that the Chinese constitution guarantees the right of lawful organizations to govern themselves.

X. Finances in the TSPM/CCC Churches

Where does the church's money come from? Does it come from the government? For registration, a church must have its own legal income. In most cases monies come from offerings which members and others who come to worship put in offering boxes at entrances to the church building. Some churches also have other money raising projects or businesses. For example, a church in Shandong Province has a tea shop and uses the income to help pay church workers. There are also churches who have received and may still receive payment in rent and compensation for property confiscated by the government during the Cultural Revolution, but this is compensation rather than a government subsidy.

How are the pastors paid? Are they paid by the church? Older pastors are retired from jobs they held when churches were closed and have pensions from that source. Therefore, less money is needed in church budgets to support them. Some Provincial Christian Councils provide the pastors' salaries. In other areas the pastors are paid by the church. In some poor areas where the church cannot afford to pay a living wage, younger pastors often become bi-vocational.

How can a foreigner contribute money to the Chinese Church? A foreigner can freely place money in the offering boxes at the churches. Other monetary gifts can be given as long as they are designated for or can be used for projects initiated by the Chinese Church itself.

For more information on the church in China today: Read the Amity News Service at www.amityfoundation.org

Teacher Lin

Caroline Fielder⁴

Hello! My name is Teacher Lin and I'm a middle school teacher here in China. I teach in a beautiful but poor town in Jiangxi Province. I became a teacher at the start of the Cultural Revolution. I was sixteen and had just finished middle school myself when I went to teach in a small village school. At that time most of the professional teachers were sent into the countryside to help with the manual labour, so there was no one to help me with my teaching. For a while, classes weren't regular as the students were often busy with other things. Secretly I would listen to the radio to improve my English. There were no lights at night and I would work by candlelight but love my secret study.

By the time I was thirty, I was married with a child. At that time I was appointed as an English teacher at the Number Middle School of Xiushui, where I've been teaching ever since. Unlike my old school this school is quite well located, close to the centre of town. Despite this, however, the conditions in the school are bad. The school's funding is low and it is badly equipped. As a result few well-qualified teachers want to work here.

With only 600 students our school is not considered large. There is only one teaching block and no formal playground for the children. In the classrooms there are often not enough desks and four of the chairs in my classroom only have three legs. The living accommodation for the teachers is poor with little electricity and no running water. Water is collected from the school well. The small school dining room is in dire need of repair. What the students and teachers wish for most, however, is a library of their own where students can borrow books to help with their studies.

My colleagues are conscientious but we recognize that our qualifications are inadequate. My best friend here, Teacher Wang, is the class leader of Class 1, Grade 2. She is lucky to be a college graduate but English was not her major - she studied music. To begin with, she was only one or two lessons ahead of her students. Like me she enjoys both studying and teaching English but she is frustrated that her musical training has never been put to use.

For the past few years we have all made a concerted effort to raise our teaching level. We have visited other schools in the area and learn from the experience of better-qualified teachers. Recently we have had regular meetings and study sessions to help us with our teaching. Sometimes, though, I'm afraid that it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks!

Junior English for China has been introduced nationwide as the new textbook for English. It's a good book which focuses on all four skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking. It's quite a change from the traditional textbook and there has been a distinct change in the role of the teacher, too. The classes should now be much more student-centered than before. It's not easy though, in a class of 64 students, to supervise them all and make sure they are doing their work properly. Some naughty students just refuse to study and disturb the other students. As a result, I often still teach from the front of the class, so that I can keep control. This new book is functional in its approach and hopes to give the students a confident base in oral English.

⁴ This was written with the help of my 93/1 class at Jiujiang Teachers' College, based on an assignment they wrote after their teaching practice about the life of a typical middle-school teacher. It is a synthesis of the ideas that they wrote about. (Caroline)

However, time is a large constraint, so I often have to rush through the lesson, not giving the students the oral practice they need.

There are other problems involved in using this book. The first is the examination system, which continues to concentrate on the written word. Until this changes, neither the students nor the teacher will use the book as it was intended to be used.

Another problem is that Junior English for China relies heavily on tapes for its many dialogues. These tapes are very good and our school has bought both the tapes and a recorder for us to use in class. The problem is that we rarely have enough electricity to use the tape-recorder, so we have to read the dialogues to the students ourselves. In this way the students are forced to learn from our pronunciation rather than that on the tapes. For many students, their school fees are sacrifice enough for their families to find; the tapes are a luxury that they simply cannot afford. I think that this could lead to an increase in the gap between the rich coastal provinces (where facilities are good) and the poorer inland provinces. Students in the east will improve quickly while the level of our students here will remain poor.

A lot of students come from poor families. They don't really see that they'll ever be able to use their English practically and so their hearts aren't really in their studies. They want to pass their exams, but that is all. I try to encourage them and help them with their studies. Sometimes I teach them English songs and once a month we have an English corner, where the students can practice their English freely. To be honest, though, I worry about their exams, too.

Although I get much satisfaction when a student makes progress, or even gains a place in college, I have been sorely tempted to give up teaching and go into business somewhere or somehow. When I was young I felt contented to be a teacher. At that time many of my friends were even poorer than myself. Now they are all working and are making quite a bit of money themselves. Some of them have tried to encourage me to join them in their business ventures. Like I say, I have been tempted but I'm settled on teaching.

More and more young women in the countryside see teaching as a stable and suitable profession for them. This is especially the case if they are married as the stability means that their husbands can perhaps go south and try their chances in the job market there. Should he fail, he can return and his wife's teaching will still provide them with a roof over their heads and a steady (if small) income. Men aren't quite so enthusiastic about becoming teachers. Many are afraid that the low pay will jeopardize their chances of finding a future wife.

I've been teaching for a good many years now and don't regret my decision to stay in the profession at all. Despite the disadvantages I do believe that teaching is still the most glorious profession under the sun. I hope that in the future more money will be available to develop and improve our education system. I hope too that as you spend your time in China you'll be able to make friends with other school teachers and will learn more about teaching in China. I hope that you'll share your experiences too so that there will be greater understanding between our two countries. I wish you all the best for your time here. Welcome to China!

Lessons from Junior English for China (JEC) and Senior English for China (SEC)

Introduction:

- Many middle schools in China now use the JEC and SEC series as their textbooks for English courses. JEC is used in junior middle schools; SEC in senior middle schools. These are the textbooks that your students most probably teach.
- These textbooks are relatively new; they have been gradually introduced over the past several years.
- They have a much stronger speaking and listening focus than the previously used textbook series. While most Chinese English teachers feel these materials are good, many teachers find them difficult to teach.
- These materials are perceived as being more "Western" than the previous materials. (They were in fact created by a joint Chinese-Western team.) SEP students therefore often want Western experts to tell them how to teach these materials.
- We would encourage you to do anything you can to help Chinese teachers improve their ability to teach these materials. Your ideas and suggestions will generally be much appreciated.
- We would also caution you not to let your students too quickly put you on a pedestal. They may see you as the "Western expert" who has the magic wand that will solve all of their teaching problems. They may also tend to forget that you are a stranger to the Chinese teaching environment, and that ideas based on your Western experience may not be practical in the Chinese setting.
- The most productive approach, therefore, is probably to preface your suggestions with disclaimers like "This is how I would do it in my country, but _____." Also encourage a lot of discussion and sharing among students as to what does and doesn't work for them in Chinese classrooms.

Suggestions on use:

JEC/SEC material could be used either in the Language Learning and Teaching course or afternoon seminars. One suggested procedure for going over a unit would be:

- 1) Get photocopies made of the lesson you want to go over, and hand them out to students.
- 2) By way of preparation, you might ask students to tell you what difficulties they face in teaching any given kind of lesson. (This may help focus following discussion.)
- 3) Have students discuss in groups what the best way is to teach the lesson in class. Encourage them to try to reach a group consensus, and be ready to share their ideas with the class in the form of a series of steps for teaching the lesson or a set of tips. (It may not be hard for students to reach consensus as they have probably been trained to teach the lessons in similar ways.)
- 4) Have groups share their ideas with the class, especially any creative ideas they have about how to approach difficulties.
- 5) Respond with your own ideas and suggestions.