

A Manual for Teaching English in

CHINA

〔美〕比尔·伯克特 (Bill Burkett) 编著

余宛玉 审校



北京邮电大学出版社
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内 容 简 介

A Manual for Teaching English in China 是一本被实践证明了的、真实有效的英语教学指南,它涉及如何真实地反映学生开学前的英语水平和良好的教学策略等内容,其中包括:如何训练学生各方面的素质;如何给学生编制反映其真实水平的口语测试题;如何启发那些英语水平不够高的学生快速赶上学习进度;提高学生词汇量的三个步骤;实现英语应用的三个步骤;如何在课堂上教授语言技能等方面的内容。作者与我们分享了新颖的课堂组织技巧、创意十足的教学方法、评分制度、评估程序、干扰学生学习的因素分析、课堂管理技巧、教学资源、具有很高应用价值的教学网站及中国的文化和生活等丰富的内容。可以说,该书囊括了您需要了解的有关在中国教授英语的一切,它可以作为每一位来中国教授英语的外籍教师的必读指南。

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Dedication

I dedicate this manual of practical teaching methods to the real heroes of China's English literacy, the Chinese teachers of English. They stand in the remote classrooms of China's countryside and the modern schoolrooms of large cities, often living sacrificially to mold young lives. This commitment to their profession launches their students into a more prosperous future because they have given them the English language, the business language of the world. The students they have taught come to us, the foreign English teachers, to colleges and universities across China, reading, writing and speaking English. These teachers who prepared these students are the unsung heroes of English literacy that have made a great contribution to China's economic future. They have nurtured the World Trade Organization—WTO—generation of The New China. If you are Chinese and you can read these lines, you have a Chinese teacher to thank.

——Bill Barkett

谨以此书献给中国英语领域的真正英雄——人民教师。他们驻足在中国农村偏远的教室和大都市里现代化的教室,无私地塑造着年轻一代的生命。这种职业奉献精神为他们的学生开创了一个更加成功美好的未来,因为他们教给学生的是一种世界性的商务语言。他们的学生遍及中国各大高校,读、写和说着英语。这些中国英语界的无名英雄,为中国的经济做出了巨大贡献。他们培育了新中国世贸组织崭新的一代。如果您是一位中国人,我想提醒您——您要满心感谢您的英语老师!

——比尔·伯克特

Preface

Imagine this scenario: You are finally boarding your flight to China with about thirteen hours of flying time ahead of you before landing at your destination. As you settle down in your seat, waiting for the drinks to come down the aisle, you start wondering again what in the world teaching English in China will be like, anyway? You're struggling with how you'll approach this new teaching job when you begin your classes. A hundred questions form in your mind, and your anxiety level begins to rise. Suddenly the man sitting next to you strikes up a conversation about the weather and other small talk. Then he tells you that he lives in China, has been working as a teacher there for seven years, and really loves it! He is now returning to teach at a University in Chengdu. You can hardly believe your ears! Here is a teacher who has been teaching English in China sitting right beside you. You have a captive source of information for the long flight over the Pacific Ocean! You don't want to scare him, so you very casually tell him you're going to China for your first time as a teacher, and you have no idea how you will approach this new job. Being the dedicated teacher he is, he offers to answer any questions you have. Now, pretend these events have happened to you, and that I am that man sitting next to you. By the time you land in China, you will feel a lot better about your new job. So, buckle up your seat belt, settle back, and relax as I try to answer all of the major questions you may have. And, by the way, what we'll be talking about will help new Chinese teachers of English as well.

When one undertakes to write a manual, small or large, it usually indicates that the writer wants to share information that he feels is not out there for the people who need it. Such a manual should provide special information that's needed but not available in one source. This is the case with this manual, in which I endeavor to help young aspiring Chinese and foreign teachers to enter their classroom with a better sense of direction than if they had not had the help

it offers. Academics are essential to the progress of any society, but too often practical advice and classroom savvy are lacking. You may feel well taught in your field of expertise, but you soon learn upon entering the classroom, that you still have a lot of practical procedures you feel a little vague and uncertain about, and especially, as it applies to Oral English. This little easy reference manual, *Teaching English in China—TEC*, will hopefully supplement what you already know with some good, practical principles in classroom procedures.

I have a very high level of respect for all of my Chinese colleagues who, by their teaching efforts, are developing young lives into useful adults who will go on to build the new China in the WTO generation. Teachers who can release each student at the end of the year knowing they have made a positive contribution to that student's future represent the greatest hope for China's future. Young people educated in the English language have a better chance of knowing a higher quality of life. This *TEC Manual* is intended to be a primer to enhance any English teacher's ability to better build these young lives. The reward of being a good teacher is the satisfaction of knowing you have put into the world new adult people who are not a part of the world's problems, but rather, are a part of the solution to those problems.

For the new Oral English foreign teachers arriving from abroad, this manual offers good information and many teaching methods that you can use to better organize and conduct your classes. Indeed, if I were to give this manual a key word, it would be the word *practical*. For students who are preparing to teach upon graduation from college, this manual is packed with practical information that you will never learn in the college classroom, unless your college has made this manual required reading. Seasoned teachers who have long experience in teaching will also benefit from many of the tips given here regarding achieving good pronunciation and understanding the language hurdles that make some words too high to get over. I have lectured middle school teachers and found many of these seasoned teachers were teaching incorrect pronunciation to their middle school students. Many aspects of this practical manual on teaching English will help even the older and more experienced English teachers. Teaching is an art that can constantly be refined and brought to new levels of

effectiveness.

This *TEC* manual is directed to all those involved in learning and teaching English, but even teachers who teach other subjects will find methods and class structure ideas here that will help them. If you are a foreign teacher coming to China, this little manual will give you a valuable glimpse into the classroom of an experienced foreign teacher in a Chinese middle school, college, or university setting, beginning with the very first day. Of course, this information will help you get started and introduce you to what to expect. This is a primer, not an exhaustive authority on Oral English procedures. It also gives you a good idea of the range of issues that can be involved in teaching Oral English. You will, in time, develop your own proficient methods of teaching according to your personality, your formal training background, and your personal teaching philosophies as you progress in your career teaching in China.

I remember very well my first Oral English class. I had no idea what to do, and in the third class after my arrival, I was still floundering. I will never forget the day that the president of the school came to sit in on my lesson! I didn't even know what I was doing, and here was the president, sitting back at the rear of the room, arms folded looking at me askance. Sweating a little, I decided to deliver a lecture on the subject of time, explaining that time was like money, because you could purchase things in life with time. However, if you spent it wisely, you could purchase things with time that you could not with money. As I lectured, I stopped along the way to emphasize pronunciation and new words. The president became so excited about the lecture that he ordered all of the English teachers on the staff (fifty of them) to attend my classes when they did not have their own classes! Now I was really in hot water! I had to produce miracles in every class or risk jeopardizing my image. Perhaps it was that pressure that made me press ahead for results with my class.

I had taught in many different kinds of teaching environments over the years, but when I came to China, I didn't have the slightest idea what materials would be available to me or even what textbooks I would be using. I was especially in the dark about classroom procedures and methods, not to mention

the grading system. What was going to be expected of me as a teacher of Oral English? I did everything I could to find the practical information I needed. I found some information scattered across several very good ESL websites, but nothing that provided step-by-step classroom procedures. It was then that the idea was born in my mind to write such a practical manual that would take a teacher by the hand and lead him or her through the first few days and weeks of teaching Oral English in a Chinese classroom. I also had a good friend teaching in China who helped me tremendously, but Floyd wasn't there to help me in my classroom. A practical manual to help me just wasn't out there. Well, I am happy to say that it is out there now!

I am not implying that you should follow every piece of advice found here. Rather, I am setting forth some vital information to help you in the areas of teaching that you will encounter as you move through your first semester. You will meet and discuss teaching with your many new colleagues, and they too will share with you some excellent ideas that you will surely want to consider using. This manual probably contains more information than you will be able to use, but it is a rich source of practical ideas from which you can choose when you are just starting out.

I am fully aware that the teaching procedures set down in this manual represent my personal approach to teaching and will differ from the procedures of other teachers with perhaps much more experience. Teaching a language class is new to most of us when we come to China. I want to provide teachers not only with methods of teaching, but also with some special helpful advice to help the foreign teacher adjust to the culture of China.

There are manuals out there that are very good and much more thoroughly written by professionals, but they are mainly available through the placement agencies that train their candidates for teaching abroad. Most of these manuals are quite large and generic in their approach, written for any foreign country and not for China in particular. This manual is written only with teaching in China in mind.

If you are coming to China as a foreign teacher to teach Oral English at the

college level, you will find that your students will have five to seven years of English when they come into your class. They have been taught by deeply committed Chinese teachers. In their other Chinese/English classes, your students are learning grammar, reading, writing skills and composition. In addition, speech, memorization and workbooks have all been a part of their other English classes under the Chinese teachers. Most students can read and write English with much more proficiency than they can speak it. This is certainly one of the reasons why the Chinese government saw the need to raise the English (and other foreign language) speech skills to match the reading and writing skills, of which the average student seems to have the better command.

Foreign teachers are to provide the Chinese students with something the Chinese teachers cannot give them, and that is the opportunity to speak with foreign teachers and learn to improve their pronunciation of English. The exposure of the students to pure native English is the correct special emphasis of the Oral English classes. The Chinese Department of Education spends millions of renminbi, or RMB, each month to pay the travel and monthly salaries of foreign teachers so that our Chinese students may have the special privilege of being exposed to the sound of pure English speech. Forgive me for repeating this job description so many times in different ways throughout this manual, but it is extremely important to have that singular purpose imbedded in our minds every time we enter a classroom.

Some strong advice for the foreign teacher: When you come to China, you will see that the social habits here are much different than in the West. Family ties are stronger; there is a deeper respect for symbols of authority including teachers and especially parents, and for the Chinese authorities and Chinese tradition. College freshmen are bonded to their grandparents with the same affection as for their parents. On any given night, you will see grandparents out with their grandchildren. I have seen as many children with their grandparents as I have with their parents. You should note all of these features of Chinese culture, and then adjust your teaching, and even your lifestyle, to complement and enhance these positive cultural traits, and not defy or be secretly set on changing them to your cultural values.

As a foreign teacher, I urge you to leave cultural philosophies peculiar to the West behind you, and to open your mind to new ways of seeing the world. It's not advisable to impose your cultural habits on the Chinese. There is already enough corrupting influence coming into China from the West through the film and video industry. The tendency of some of us to think we do it better where we come from really just represents a difference in habit and cultural perception. The way in which we are accustomed to viewing the world is not necessarily the better way. The old idiom, *When in Rome, do as the Romans do*, is good advice when you come here. In my experience, having resided both in China for seven years and the United States, and having lived in forty-three other countries in less than fifty years, the Chinese traditional culture is one of the most highly civilized in the world.

The Chinese student is very patriotic and loves his Motherland. To make this point meaningful, I will be very blunt with any foreign colleagues who are reading these lines. Historically, Western countries have ravaged this land and the people of China since the time of Marco Polo. This was possible partly because the Chinese people are strong but gracious in nature. However, since the revolution and the bonding of the fifty-six ethnic peoples that make up China, there is a silent but deep-rooted resolve in their natures never to be pushed around by foreign powers again. Foreign teachers must respect that historical fact and respect the laws of the People's Republic of China when they arrive. We who come from the West should carefully observe the Chinese behavior. We could learn a lot from it. You will not be in China long before you see that you are destined to have a wonderful experience and meet some extremely nice people who will be among your dearest friends.

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Chapter One

The First Steps Toward Teaching in China

Finding your job in China should not prove too difficult a challenge. If anyone in your family or circle of friends has taught in China, then that is where you should begin. If these contacts are in China when you become interested, then you should contact them. If they are able to help you make contact with a school near them, they would be the ideal contact. Then after being in China the first year, you could learn your way around and know better what you want in a school for the next contract.

The best way to establish yourself in China as a good teacher is to find the school setting that fits your preferences and then settle on that campus and faithfully and loyally serve that school. In this way, you establish yourself and become an asset to that school. On the other hand, some teachers prefer to change teaching locations from year to year and remain in China with seemingly good results.

Another way to know if China is where you want to teach is to visit China on a tourist visa; visit different campuses in a large city or two, and speak to different college and university officials about coming to China as a teacher. In this way, you could look over the facilities provided for foreign teachers and gain first hand knowledge of what's available and what your experience might be like. You would then return home and apply to the school of your choice. Of course, it's much less expensive to negotiate everything through e-mail, and that works well for many teaching candidates. Chinese school officials are very candid and honest when communicating with you long distance, via telephone or e-mail.

Do you prefer to work in a large and more Westernized part of China? Then you should choose the coastal cities such as Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou

and Shanghai. These regions pay more, but the cost of living is higher than in inland China.

Your level of education must be considered also. To teach in a college or university, you will need at least a bachelor's degree. If you are a high school graduate, you may qualify to teach in some middle schools (junior and senior high school students). Teachers are needed in high schools as well as in the colleges and universities, but if you sign with a middle school, be very sure that they are qualified to use foreign teachers before you spend a lot of time and money talking to them. All schools want foreign teachers badly. It sometimes happens that a school will invite a foreign teacher to come and teach in their school simply on a visitor's visa. This is illegal. To live and teach in China, you must have a Z visa, and that can only be procured with a yellow letter of invitation from the provincial government who issues this letter to the college. The college, in turn, will send this yellow letter to you to accompany your Z visa application.

After choosing and communicating with the school in which you want to work, you will send them a copy of your resume and a letter of intent, informing them of your desire to teach at their school. You will also need two or three letters of recommendation from people who know you well. The school will then send you a list of documents you must submit to them and a copy of the contract. Read it carefully. If you have any questions, you should discuss them by e-mail with the school. You should be clear on all the details of the arrangement, and keep these e-mail exchanges for future reference. The school officials will be eager to answer any questions you might have, and you can be assured that they will do this truthfully. You will not have to worry about Chinese authorities, especially in the state colleges and universities, leaving you with any false impressions. They are often honest to their own detriment. Once you understand everything, you can sign the contract and return it to the school with the other items they request to be sent. This may include a copy of your diploma, a couple of passport size photos for their files, and a copy of your passport, along with the letters of recommendation. Be very careful to submit all information honestly and accurately. The school, college, or university will

process your contract application through the Provincial Foreign Affairs authorities.

When the Provincial Foreign Affairs Office—FAO—approves your application, the college will be given the official letter of invitation by them, and they will in turn mail that official document (invitation) to you. It is a large yellow paper. When you have that yellow letter in your hands, you then know that your invitation is finalized, and you have been approved to live and work in China. Not all schools are approved by the Chinese government to hire foreign teachers, but that official yellow letter proves that the school you have been talking to is authorized to hire foreign teachers. The provincial letter of invitation is only issued to schools with foreign teacher status. You cannot get a Z visa without that provincial letter of invitation. NEVER strike out to work in China with anything but a Z visa!

Once you have received that plain looking yellow letter of invitation from the college with whom you have contracted, you then send your passport with photos, visa application, and fees *with that official letter* to the Chinese embassy and apply for the Z visa. The Z visa is a working visa and permits you to live in China and receive pay here. Now you know the proper procedure for arranging a teaching position in China.

A word about physical examinations: If you contract for one year or less, you do NOT have to have a physical as of this writing. If you will be staying in China for more than one year, you will need to have a physical exam. If the school in which you're going to work requires the physical, just go ahead and process the visa because the physical exam is not required by the Chinese embassy to get your Z visa. You can get a physical exam in the Chinese hospital near your college after you arrive. When you get to China, you can ascertain whether or not your school will require the physical. Taking the physical in China after you arrive will most likely be cheaper and more convenient than having it done in the West.

You can visit the Chinese embassy website—search “Chinese embassy” on Google—to read all requirements for a Z visa. The embassy website is the final

authority on the physical exam, for example. You can also print out the visa application from the Chinese embassy website if the form is not readily available at the travel agency where you buy your air ticket to China. I advise you to visit the Chinese embassy website and compare all information there with what you read here and from other sources of information. The rules change from time to time and you must consult the embassy (website) to be sure you have the most current information when you apply.

I also suggest that you use the Internet to gain more information about teaching in China. Simply search the terms *ESL* and/or *Teaching English in China* on any search engine. Search engines that are popular and powerful are www.dogpile.com and www.google.com. You'll have more hits than you can possibly visit. That's all there is to it, and you'll have all the information you want at your fingertips.

When you start looking for a job overseas, you can either go through a placement service or negotiate your own contract directly by contacting the college or university and establishing your own dialogue with the FAO of that school. This is quite easy with e-mail. Here are a few things you might want to consider asking them, depending on your age and personal preferences. Remember that you can freely discuss any preferences you may have with the friendly people with whom you are negotiating at the school:

- 1. The number of hours you would be teaching each week—** Sixteen hours is normal.
- 2. Would your weekends be free?** You may want Saturday and Sunday off to travel or simply relax.
- 3. Do they have a website address you can visit?** This can be a handy source of information and will give you a sense of the campus.
- 4. Is your apartment on campus or off campus?** If it is off campus, you may have to walk or travel to get to class. Many colleges have faculty living quarters on campus.
- 5. Does the college provide a bicycle or other transportation?** This is



significant if there is a distance between your apartment and your classroom.

6. **What utilities does the school pay, and what utilities must the teacher pay out of his salary?** The school usually pays all utilities, except personal ones such as your telephone bill. They may allow you an allowance, meaning you must pay what's over a certain set amount. I seldom have to pay, and this includes computer time also.
7. **Does the college provide a computer?** Most colleges do provide foreign teachers with a desktop computer in their apartment.
8. **Ask them to describe the living quarters.** Which floor, hot water, tub or shower, toilet seat or squatty potty (an opening flush with the floor)?
9. **Is there heat in the winter?**
10. **Is there air conditioning in the hot season?** It does get hot.
11. **Is the school approved to have foreign teachers with Z visas?**
12. **Is travel expense paid to and from China?** If you sign a contract for at least one school year, the school usually pays this expense. If you sign a contract for only one semester (six months), you will usually have to pay one way, and they pay one way.

If you do not have a computer or access to e-mail, the college officials may be willing to negotiate the contract with you over the telephone. These questions are important to you, especially if you are talking to two or three schools. You need to be able to compare what kind of experience and compensation each school is offering. When you make your decision, they will send you a contract to sign and return with all of the conditions including pay. Once you get the contract and look it over, then you will have a few more questions. Contracts are basically the same from one school to another, because they are forms recommended by the state educational authorities. Thus, they should be relatively easy to compare. I did, however, receive a five-page contract from one school and an eleven-page contract from another. Though they use the same