



2006 Teaching & Training Project in Yujiang Project Report

Introduction

By Richard Zhao, 2006 TTP Trip Leader and chair of Operation D.E.E.P.

The 2006 Teaching and Training Project (2006 TTP) was Operation D.E.E.P.'s second annual project in Yujiang, which is home to the D.E.E.P.-funded-600-student elementary school, Jin-Ni LFA Hope School. In the spirit of last year's project during which I gave training to local primary school English teachers, the main goal for the 2006 TTP was to train more than 50 junior-high school English teachers from Yujiang county to improve their spoken English as well as their listening comprehension. Moreover, D.E.E.P. has opened this year's project to the entire Cornell community in order to seek out committed and enthusiastic teaching volunteers from a variety of backgrounds. In addition to myself, there were four participants in the project: Candy Darnell, Josh Fenn, Michael Goulet, and Hannah Rogers.

Josh, Michael, and Hannah were selected through an open application process in the Cornell community. We received more than two dozens of applications from excellent candidates and picked the three who most exemplify the project's mission.

Candy Darnell is an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher at Lake Forest Academy (LFA), my alma mater. After visiting Yujiang in 2005 as part of the LFA Education Delegation to China, Candy fell in love with Yujiang. Right after she returned to the U.S. in July 2005, Candy applied for the Mint's Grant at LFA. She was granted \$4,000 to go to Yujiang and teach English lessons over the summer.

Josh Fenn '07 is a biology and society major student who has also participated in the FALCON (Full-year Asian Language Concentration) program. He travels to China frequently and studied as an exchange student at Tsinghua University in 2005. He has also had experience teaching in Shanghai. In addition, Josh is the publicity manager of Operation D.E.E.P.

Michael Goulet '06 is a mechanical engineering graduate. He is very interested in sustainable development and previously traveled to Honduras on a water treatment plant project.



Hannah Rogers is a Ph.D. candidate in science and technology studies. Before becoming a graduate student at Cornell, she traveled to China's Hubei Province on her own and taught at a junior-high school for a year.

The Training

By Josh Fenn, volunteer and Operation D.E.E.P. publicity manager

Over the course of the two weeks spent in Yujiang, our curriculum followed a logical progression. Our primary focus was to build day-to-day spoken English skills in order to dissuade the local teachers from speaking "textbook" English, which is too stilted for practical use. Topics covered include *Introductions*, *Food*, *Directions*, *Common Vocabulary* and *Manners*, among others.



Lessons were designed to build on each other not only to reinforce the material, but also to give trainees an idea of how to use the material in multiple real-life settings. Exercises were largely team-oriented to encourage uninhibited speaking practice. For example, after

presenting the *Food* lessons, the teachers were split up into small groups and told to act out a restaurant scenario. They then had the option of performing their scene in front of the class. Most exercises were variations on this main design.

One of our central goals for the project was to instruct teachers on effective teaching techniques. We achieved this by presenting the material to the teachers in a way that would also be effective if presented to their students. By doing so, we were able to give teachers a first-hand experience of our teaching



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Class A
Instructors: Darnell, Fenn, Goulet & Zhao

techniques, and allow them to adopt those techniques they considered effective. Finally, we devoted one class period to an in-depth comparison of American and Chinese teaching techniques, and brainstormed solutions for common problems (such as an overabundance of students). Having had experience in an American classroom environment, we were poised to provide the teachers with a unique outlook on their teaching exercises and class organization.

The training was quite successful. Although the classrooms were very hot and humid during the lessons, the trainees overcame the uncomfortable condition and continued to show extreme enthusiasm for our lessons. On our end-of-training instructor evaluations, all the



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Class B
Instructor: Miss Hannah Rogers

trainees said that Operation D.E.E.P. gave them an once-in-a-lifetime experience of speaking to and learning from native English speakers. Moreover, the cultural and food lessons gave them an impression of what America is like, and inspired them to pass on their newfound knowledge to their own students. Their speaking and listening skills also vastly improved, and lifelong friendships were built.

I still remember how almost none of the trainees understood us during the first few classes because they were not accustomed to an American accent. Now, every one of them can communicate effectively with us in English.



Life in Yujiang

By Candy Darnell, volunteer and Lake Forest Academy ESL teacher



Our days were busy. We taught in the mornings 3 hours and in the afternoons 3 hours. The heat was too strong to teach during early and mid afternoons. We taught a big group of teachers who came from all over the province. It was a wonderful experience. It was interesting to get their views on teaching. It was also surprising to hear the differences between teaching in China and in the U.S.A. Class sizes in Yujiang ranged from the high forties to over eighty-seven! These teachers have very long days and much work is done in their free time. When they came to our classes, it was on their free time. This shows how dedicated the teachers are to bettering themselves and offering their students a more efficiently taught class.

I found it most interesting that most, if not all, of these teachers who teach English in the schools have never spoken to a native speaker of English. They had a very hard time understanding spoken English. I asked them how they taught their students to speak. With various answers, I surmised that the teachers did the best they could with pronunciation and the students followed them. A lot of their work in class consists of memorization. One of the teachers told me that each student had to learn 20,000 English words to pass a test to a

higher level. Most teachers had to learn 80,000 English words in order to be teachers. Therefore, words are memorized but are not fully understood nor are they pronounced correctly. Consequently, Chinese students come to the U.S.A. to improve their English language but are unable to understand spoken English or write paragraphs and or essays correctly. Unfortunately, this causes the students to have to stay in E.S.L. programs longer than they had expected to because their true abilities are hidden by their lack of understanding. By native speakers coming to enhance the teaching techniques of the Chinese English teachers as well as their pronunciation and understanding of spoken English, their students will be guaranteed a better education in the English language. In turn, there will be more teachers correctly pronouncing words in English which will pass to the children.

The love and friendship offered to me during my stay in China were unbelievably overwhelming. I have never been treated with such respect nor cosseted in the manner I was by the people I visited. I have stayed in communication with two of the teachers I taught in Yujiang and the Cornell students I traveled with, as well as Richard, of course. Though the area we were in was rural and



under-privileged, the people were more than willing to feed us, take us places, and work with us as long as possible. The teachers brought us little presents almost every day to show their appreciation for us, and we were ashamed that they were so generous to us when we just wanted to help them, but we learned that it was important for them to give to us as well. I can truly say that I was given much more tangibly and intangibly by the Chinese people I worked with than I ever thought of giving to them. When I think about being overworked or if my car has a problem or my toilet won't flush, I think of my dear friends in Yujiang who have overcome so much with so little and never complain. I think of them with admiration for the courage and dignity they naturally present, and I know how

serendipitous my fate has been to meet up with Richard Zhao and be allowed to share this adventure with him.

Conclusion

By Richard Zhao

101.5 degrees and Yujiang was not a good combination. And I am not referring to the



weather; I am talking about my body temperature. Both Josh and I got sick one week into our project. Although getting sick was not pleasant, it gave me a different perspective. I, for the first time, received I.V. injections at a rural Chinese county-level hospital. At first, I was annoyed with the unsanitary conditions of the hospital, but then I learned to

accept them. The transformation came when I realized that the hospital I was in was already one of the better ones in the area. Most villages only have small clinics in rundown structures and employ so-called “medical technicians”. There are no doctors or nurses. The only treatments you can receive are over-the-counter drugs or simple injections; to get actual diagnoses and tests, most people have to travel miles and miles to go to a hospital like the one I was in and receive proper procedures. I realized that if the people in rural China can survive in such conditions, I will not be an exception, and I learned to accept the surroundings.

The hospital visits also allowed me to see how much further China has to develop before catching up with developed countries. Although in recent years the costal areas have

undergone unprecedented growth and development, most of China remains relatively poor. Moreover, because of China's huge population, it will take decades to improve the overall living standard for the general population. All these facts and realizations motivate me to carry on what I have been doing with Operation D.E.E.P. and make a difference in my home county.

As always, this trip was a collective effort by many people. At Cornell, the Public Service Center gave us tremendous support in terms of the administrative and safety issues for the trip. Moreover, various funding sources such as the Community Partnership Board and Bartels' funding gave us the financial means of conducting our project. In Yujiang, the local Education Bureau and the Institute for Continued Education helped us in myriad ways, from arranging breakfast to taking me to the hospital. All of the volunteers were very touched by how much everyone who was involved in this project, whether a trainee or staff member of the Education Bureau, treated us with the utmost of care and hospitality to make us feel comfortable in Yujiang.

Lastly, there is one person without whom the 2006 TTP would not have been possible: the former deputy chief of Yujiang, Chen Chaozhong. Although he has returned to the Jiangxi Institute of Education after his training rotation in Yujiang, he continued to support Operation D.E.E.P. by serving as a liaison between us and the local government to set up the project. Mr. Chen is already very busy as the director of the president's office at the Institute, but he still spent a great amount of time contacting various county officials and taking several 3-hour trips to Yujiang for pre-trip preparation to ensure that the TTP would run smoothly. We cannot thank Mr. Chen enough for what he has done for Operation D.E.E.P. and the children of Yujiang.

Special Thanks To:

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Director of the President's Office, Jiangxi Institute of Education
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