

# **Business Plan Report for E-Language Learning Project**

Drafted by Business Plan Group (Wang Jian, Chen Yun Ying, Li Zhi Min)

## **Content**

Business Plan Report for E-Language Learning Project.....	1
Management.....	1
Dissemination .....	6
Sustainability.....	10
Implementation .....	13

Based on our previous group meetings and discussions, we propose to summarize the key points in the business plan report as follows:

## **Management**

Management involves the establishment of the organization and operation of the project. This is very important, especially if we consider running the program for long-term purposes. The goal of the management and operation is to have the most efficient and effective way of running the project while we achieve the significance of promoting not only each other's language, but also society, culture and history (Bi-lateral agreement between China and U.S.). This part is composed of visible and invisible organizational structure and assets to be accumulated as the project is running. The following issues need to be addressed concerning the management topic at the next conference.

### **Institutional issue (organizational structure of the project, the headquarter**

**and the agents)**

There are a number of options to establish the permanent organization for the project. The following options can be the basis for further discussion.

- The first option: Independent non-profit organization, jointly established by funding from both governments (China and the U.S.). This option seems not feasible, because the current U.S. legislation does not allow the establishment of a non-profit organization overseas together with another government (as it is discussed in Beijing Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting with Dr. Zhao). In China actually right now there is neither a clear definition nor legal status for non-profit organization. The currently so-called “Shi Ye Dan Wei”(Government funded unit) is a normal kind of non-profit organizations in China. For an educational institution, it likely falls into this category.
- The second option: Independent non-profit organizations, established separately in China and the U.S. with funding from both governments to meet the legal requirements of both countries. Through the bilateral cooperative agreement, the two parties can set up a joint office for running the project. An implementation agreement should also be signed regarding the operational and financial issues involved in the management. The joint office shall be the agencies with authorization from both parties. At the preparation stage, at least the following two committees should be established to initiate the project:
  1. Joint Steering Committee (composed of top government officials to communicate and formulate conceptual framework and supervise the

activities of the working committee, The committee should meet at least once a month to update various issues)

2. Working Committee (composed of experts in different fields to exchange ideas and work out the detailed proposals for implementation of the project by sharing one another research findings and knowledge. The committee should meet from time to time to deliver report on the latest development of implementation)
- The third option: Part of existing nonprofit organization. The existing educational institution under the Ministry of Education could take over the implementation of the project. Especially the one that has existing models and operational experience to run such a program. Examination Center of China Ministry of Education (Jiao Yu Bu Kao Shi Zhong Xin) is one of such existing nonprofit organization. University of Cambridge English Examination for Children (aged 6-12) is one of the English Language Examination Program under the Examination Center.
  - Part of University: It may not have sufficient authority in China to be influential. But this is subject to further discussion.

**Facilities and infrastructure issue (hardware and software infrastructure needed to run the project)**

This is a web-based learning project (although VCD, DVD and other multimedia versions are designed to target for users in remote geographical areas non-accessible to

Internet). We propose to choose an Internet service provider (ISP) as a testing location in each of the country, e.g. CERNET in China, an ISP to serve the educational institutions). The following facilities and infrastructure are needed for implementation:

- An office space for the working committee and the preparation group
- An independent server should be allocated for the testing and evaluation purposes.
- Access to Internet through multiple networks (in China: ChinaNet and Cernet, etc.) to ensure multiple speed (56K, ISDN, DSL, CABLE, etc.).

**Maintenance issue (mechanism to update and maintain the vitality of the project)**

- Websites/hardware and Updates: Main websites both in China and in the U.S.  
Mirror sites both in China and in the U.S.
- Content: The content of the updating website should include the following:
  - (1) Updating of the online learning materials both from China and the U.S, say once a year;
  - (2) Teaching support and relevant materials should be added to the online website.
- Management team: to be established to deal with content updating, assessment and certificate, technical support; marketing, funding resources management;

**Intellectual property issue**

The intellectual property issue involves licensing the intellectual property right (copy right), including textbook, logos, teaching material, and other publications of digital products, like the VCD, DVD and other multimedia materials

- (1) Copy right of the e-language learning project, like the logos, images, etc.;
- (2) Copy right of other referenced materials, like the Olympic logos, images, etc.

There are three kinds of licensing arrangements.

- Exclusive licensing agreement
- Sole licensing agreement
- Simple licensing agreement

Licensing is the granting of permission of use of an intellectual property right. The above three kinds of licensing agreements are differentiated as follows:

	Act	Grantor	Licensee
Exclusive license	Transfer of exclusive right to the licensee	Owner only	Exclusive user of right
Sole license	Transfer of right only to the licensee	Owner and user of right	The only user of right except grantor
Simple license	Transfer of right to the licensee	Owner and user of right	User of right

In China, a bidding process is recommended for the licensing of intellectual property right and publishing of learning and teaching materials. The bidding has been the usual practice in recent years for publishing such wide spread learning and teaching

material.

Exclusive licensing should be avoided so that the publishing would not rely too much on one publisher.

### **Dissemination**

Dissemination is concerned with how and in what way the project can reach the intended users (aged 12 to 18 students) in both countries. The goal of dissemination is to let as many users as possible to adopt and use various means (online, CD Rom, etc.) to get access to the E-language program at the largest scale. We will make an analysis of the marketing strategies for educational product (online and offline). The following issues need to be addressed concerning the dissemination topic at the next conference.

### **Marketing issue**

The purpose of marketing is to let our targeted intended user to adopt the E-language program. These requires the planning and design of marketing strategies, which include the marketing theme, intended user analysis, awareness, product offerings, networks and channels, agents and assistance, promotions, etc. Following things should be considered.

- Marketing theme: 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing
- Intended user analysis: (their key characteristics of English language learning and capability; motivate for adopting E-language program; online learning behavior, etc.)

The students aged 12 to 18 are middle school and high school students. Beginning from the middle school level, English is one of the compulsory subjects. Almost all the middle schools no matter where they are in urban cities or in the remote areas have English language course. But from Autumn Semester of 2001, the State Education Ministry requires that the English Language course should start from the third year in elementary schools.

Until now throughout the state, in large cities and in the coastal provinces, the students began learning English from the third year in elementary schools. According to the recent statistics (the Fourth National Teaching Research Symposium of English Language in Elementary Schools, 2002), English language is being taught at 27 provinces to 4.832 million students. When the students adopt the E-language English program, at least they have already some of learning experience.

In 2002, there are around 60 thousand middle schools through out the country with approximate 65 million students.

- Awareness: How and to what extent the intended users know the online learning? Are there other similar product offerings online and offline? Further research needs to be done in this respect. Middle school and high school teachers and superintendents should be aware of the project first and then the parents of the students in terms of importance of influential factors. Further research needs to be done in this respect.
- Product offerings: VCD, DVD, offline products, teaching and learning

materials should be provided to complement the online program. Because Internet is not accessible in remote areas. Even if they can have access, but still there is problem with the speed. In China VCD players are quite popular. According to market research findings in year 2001 (Oriental Market Research Co., 2001), in large cities, the family penetration rate of VCD player is as high as 85%. In the rural areas, the penetration rate is estimated to be around 25% in 2002 (rough estimated forecast based on People's Daily Market Report on Dec, 6<sup>th</sup> 1999). The number of Internet users in China is 46.8 million (3.68% of the total population) as of June 2002.

- Network and channels:

Marketing network and channels should be strong enough to cover the whole state (60 thousand middle schools and 65 million students). In order to reach the intended users, the following channels and networks should be established for the program in China.

- (1) Government education authorities (including the Examination Centers)

Three level government authorities: State; Provincial (Municipal); District (City, County).

- i. State Education Ministry (examination centers)
- ii. Provincial Education Bureau (examination centers)
- iii. District (City, County) Education Bureau (examination centers)

- (2) Middle schools and high schools (public/private/online)

- (3) Online educational networks (profit/nonprofit organizations)

Online educational networks: e.g. [www.edu.cn](http://www.edu.cn) ( )  
[www.neea.edu.cn](http://www.neea.edu.cn) ( )[www.chinaedu.edu.cn](http://www.chinaedu.edu.cn) ( )  
[www.k12.com.cn](http://www.k12.com.cn) ( ).

(4) Commercial corporations

**Venues and media issue (including publications, conferences, and teacher training opportunities)**

- Exchanges: The government gives support to the middle schools and high schools superintendents, teachers and local education authorities to participate in the bilateral exchange. This will arouse the interest and awareness of the e-language program.
- Conferences: Research conference and workshop should be held to bring the researchers, teachers, and management team together for discussion and exchanges about new education technology and teaching methodology adopted in the e-language program.
- Textbook publishers: Textbook publishers should be involved in the project at the early stages. This will provide with the traditional media to support the learning experience, as well as the dissemination of the program.
- Teacher training programs: Middle and high schools teachers should be given opportunities of minimum training which might help them to make the full use of the new technology. The teachers might give some guidance while the students is playing the major role to learn in this e-language program.
- Advertising: on TV; on radio and other media.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability is another key topic here, as this will allow the project to grow and have the utmost influence upon not only acquiring of language skills for children, but also upon the basic education reform in China concerning using innovative technologies and pedagogy of teaching foreign languages for all, especially to those in remote and rural areas of the country (Bi-lateral agreement). The goal of sustainability is to make use of the accessible resources to motivate the intended user and private sector to continue their interest in the project. The following issues need to be addressed concerning the sustainability topic at the next conference.

### **Adoption issue (incentive and key motives of students, teachers, superintendents, agents, and analysis of them to adopt the system,)**

In order to have the great influence and set up a benchmark for oral/aural English teaching the national wide, it is recommended that this e-language project should be geared to the current middle and high school English language teaching scheme.

The e-language program should be:

- Certificate program
- Compulsory oral/aural English subjects in middle and high schools
- Complementary to traditional oral/aural English teaching
- Complementary to TOEFL test

Other barriers to the adoption of the e-language program could be:

- Users' adaptability to the online new technology, e.g. speech technology, handwriting input technology, etc..
- Users' cost to use the online e-language program, e.g. internet fee, textbook expenses, teaching assistant fee, assessment fee, registration fee, etc..

But further research needs to be done to find out the incentive and key motives of students, teachers and others to adopt the system. Adoption issue is quite important for growth and sustainability of the e-language project. Research on adoption of other similar online product offerings by private corporations can be a very useful reference for implementation of e-language project.

### **Market growth issue**

- Different types of markets for the Chinese language
  - (1) In the U.S.
  - (2) In China
    - Tibet
    - Inner Mongolia
    - Hong Kong
    - Foreign students
    - Minorities & non-mandarin speakers
- Other languages could be added to the project. The model should work for other languages.
- Other extra value added services (e.g. email and other online services) can be

offered online.

**User evaluation issue (examination centers, testing on the web, certificate authorities)**

User evaluation could be done in the following three ways:

- Examination centers (Face to face testing)
- Online web testing
- Certificates (varies levels for users based on online/offline test)

**Funding issue (government, philanthropic organizations, private firms, etc.)**

- Support from government

Both governments will provide with initial investment for the startup of the project.

- Philanthropy from corporations

Technology support: seek support from private corporations of hardware and software, e.g. operating system; speech technology; platform software from Cisco, IBM, Microsoft, etc.;

Also we may seek financial support from foundations, venture capital, etc.

- Business plan:
  - (1) Revenue sources: copy right of textbook and teaching materials; licensing agreement with private corporations.
  - (2) Membership: online membership for extra and upscale services

**Private sector involvement issue**

- Distribution of the learning and teaching materials
- Online/offline teaching support/assistance

- Cooperate with private sector through such means as licensing, franchising, incorporating, which might be complementary (not competing with) to the current profit/non-profit online language teaching project, like Crazy English, Oztime, New Oriental English, etc.

### **Implementation**

Generally it takes two steps to implement the system. The first step is to test the system (pilot program) in both countries at different locations and different situations. Any successful implementation will depend on shortening the learning curve. This is especially true in our case as there is not any experience that we can draw from. And this means we will implement the project on trial and error basis. It is important that we shall have the independent evaluation on the implementation of the project to learn as we do. The following issues need to be addressed concerning the implementation topic at the next conference.

#### **Project evaluation issue (project implementation effectiveness)**

This is done by another group.

#### **Pilot program (testing the system, where, when, whom, how)**

The testing pilot program should be done according to the following criteria. We recommend testing the system from middle schools (beginners). We would like to do a comparison study in the following aspect:

- Implementation in different locations (regions or areas);
- Effectiveness of learning experience by different speed access;
- Learning experience in different ways (online and offline);
- Learning and teaching in the same location but different speed;
- User analysis (online free registration)

The testing samples should not be too many, but enough to do a comparison study and research (here we recommend 54 samples in China).

	Urban Cities (3)	Small and Medium Cities (3)	Remote Rural Area (3)
Broadband (2)			
Dial-up (2)			
Offline (2)			

**Full implementation (where, when, whom, how)**

Full implementation should be done after the testing research.