

FOREWORD

By Andrew Kincart

As recently as July 2010, I had the fortuitous opportunity to observe and assist Tonson Man in teaching a summer intensive CBEST training seminar. Having no prior experience teaching a CBEST preparation course, it was an invaluable learning experience for me as an ESL instructor. The primary reason for this experience proving to be so worthwhile was the fact that I worked with an individual whom I see as being the most qualified person in the field to guide the Chinese-speaking population toward the goal of becoming qualified teachers in California and beyond. I say Chinese-speaking solely because this is the society and culture from which Mr. Man immigrated. Hence, it is his personal story – comprised of decades of daily experiences that are relevant to the instruction of this course. This is something that came as a bit of a surprise to me as the course ensued, and Tonson began to draw from his vast stockpile of personal experience, as well as volumes of documents that comprise the main courses in a comprehensive smorgasbord of teaching material. This smorgasbord is the result of a lifetime of tenacious career development that began with studying abroad in England, and continued with emigrating to the USA to become a certified teacher in several capacities. Based on this foundation of personal career development that began in China and continues to grow in the field of education in California, this book has been a project in the making for well over a decade.

Personally speaking, the realization that Tonson had certainly done his research regarding the CBEST occurred in our first meeting, just days before our first class. After being shown the general course outline, Tonson began to pull up an array of files on his notebook computer as our conversation traversed the wide range of topics in relation to the CBEST. I had been brought on board to participate in the capacity of a teaching assistant – using my writing and editing experience to put the fine touches on the course that Tonson had been developing for many years. I mention this because, at some point, Tonson commented that he would be assisting us (another assistant and me) by letting us present the course content, and he would interject to offer his expertise on any given subject. While this could easily have been perceived as an intimidating imposition that entailed much more responsibility than was first implied, I saw it as comforting support and a unique opportunity. I saw it as such because it was immediately clear to me that my work was already cut out for me, including tried and true teaching material that had been refined over years of experience developing this course. In addition to this, the individual who developed all of this would be right there with me to offer input and “CBEST wisdom” – in effect, making it a far more integrated instruction than I could have implemented on my own. It was an optimal case of on-the-job training. My initial recognition of this cooperative approach immediately allowed for a rapport to exist between Tonson and myself, which proved to be a core factor in producing a successful seminar. In addition to this, I was given a rare opportunity in teacher training for the CBEST preparation course.

Tonson Man's personal background – as a native speaker of Cantonese, educated in Mandarin and then in English to become a public school teacher in California with over 20 years experience – is the foundation of this book. Simply put, he has been through all the stages of acculturation into American society, as well as the steps of professional qualification that have brought him to where he is now. And let me make it clear that he accomplished this on his own, by sheer will power and ingenuity. In this sense, he is a pioneer in his field. Based on this foundation, this book has unique worth for the native speaker of Chinese. Beyond this, Tonson has made it his own personal project to develop the CBEST training course by identifying all of the hurdles that need to be overcome in the process of becoming a qualified teacher in California. For, as I have learned through working with Tonson, the CBEST is not merely a test of English and math ability. It is implicitly a test of cultural orientation into Californian society, and only an immigrant to this society can be fully aware of all of the implications involved. It is this final point that I feel is the crux of why this book has unique worth. If the reader of this book is given the further opportunity to be led through it by Tonson himself in his CBEST training course, this worth will be brought to its full fruition via all of the anecdotal wisdom that the author spontaneously shares in the process of facilitating the work he has developed throughout his life.

Andrew Kincart - Personal profile

Andrew Kincart has been an ESL instructor in various contexts for over 20 years. Most of his teaching experience has been in Taiwan, where he has lived intermittently since 1989. A resident of California, he took the CBEST in 1997 to expand his teaching qualifications. He has done freelance writing and editing throughout his teaching career, as well as being an entrepreneur and sole proprietor of a small business. He is currently enrolled in an MBA program in Taiwan, where he has made his second home as developed throughout his life.