Preparing Papuan EFL teachers for the IELTS and Australian Development Scholarships

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This study evaluates the success of an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparation program for 14 Papuan EFL teachers conducted in Papua Indonesia. The program aimed to familiarise the teachers with the IELTS, enhance their test readiness and confidence, and increase their capacity to reach the Australian Award Scholarship’s English proficiency requirement of IELTS 5.0. Preparation materials developed by the first author were used in face-to-face, email and self-study modes. Adjustments to input were made during program delivery based on participant feedback, investigator observation and reflection. Two evaluative instruments were used: two practice IELTS tests delivered during the program and one official IELTS test conducted post-program; and a post-program participant survey on key aspects of the program and the participants’ degree of self-perceived test readiness and confidence. Lessons were learnt concerning the provision of offshore test preparation in a remote developing country which may assist in the design of similar programs.

Introduction

Education capacity building is a substantial undertaking for many developing countries and the countries that aid their development. Governments of developing communities, such as the Indonesian province of Papua, view proficiency in English language as the pathway to international mobility and advancement in educational capacity. However, quality English language instruction is in short supply in Papua due to several factors: geographical remoteness, the high costs of accessing private tuition and the lack of proficient teachers in the public system.

The current international development literature diverges in its view on the role of English language in development contexts. In certain contexts, the risks of embedding English within a development model outweigh the benefits – see Coleman (2011)
for a comprehensive review of the negative impacts. Among the positive roles of English identified by Coleman, three are particularly relevant to this study in Papua province, Indonesia: ‘facilitating international mobility, unlocking development opportunities, and accessing crucial information’ (2011, p. 11). The end goal of the program outlined in this paper was to provide the Papuan participants with access to an Australian university learning experience, thereby increasing their English language discipline and pedagogical knowledge, with the ultimate intention of developing human resource capacity and advancing Papua’s schooling system towards international standards.

To assist developing countries to improve the quality of their public sector human resources, the Australian government established the Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) program, rebranded in 2013 as Australia Award Scholarships (AAS). AAS is administered by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The purpose of the scholarships is for people from qualifying countries to gain knowledge and skills ‘to drive change and contribute to the development outcomes of their own country’ (AusAID, 2013). The scholarships are available to those employed in government and non-government sectors to study mostly at postgraduate level in Australia. The acronyms ADS and AAS are used interchangeably in this article.

To apply for AAS, applicants must first sit an English proficiency test, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test. IELTS is a test of English for academic and vocational purposes managed jointly by three partners: University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the British Council and IELTS Australia: IDP Education Australia. The test, consisting of writing, reading, listening and speaking components, is designed to measure ‘the language ability of candidates who intend to study or work where English is used as the language of communication’ (IELTS, 2003, p. 3). Achievement of IELTS 5.0 qualifies the participants to apply for the highly competitive ADS. However, the problem for participants in remote regions like Papua Indonesia is that they do not have access to the IELTS test, or to a course to prepare them for the test in the first instance. This paper reports on a preparation program with a group of 14 Papuan English teachers that was designed to bridge this gap.

Upon entry to the AAS program, funding is provided for additional pre-course English (PCE) language study with a contracted English language provider in Indonesia, the Indonesia Australia Language Foundation (IALF). At the end of this in-country IELTS and Academic English preparation course, awardees sit a final IELTS test that determines whether their proficiency meets the entry requirements for their postgraduate program of choice at an Australian university. For example, Australian master’s programs usually require an IELTS score of 6.5.
The IELTS preparation program in this study was an enabling program, in that it enabled the participants, who had previously undertaken a short 10-week course in TESOL methodology at the authors’ university, to study IELTS preparation for the first time. The post-program IELTS test conducted in Papua also offered participants the opportunity to fulfil the AAS IELTS requirement. This opportunity would not otherwise have been available to them without the expense of funding their own English study and travel to sit an IELTS test at an institution outside of the province.

The objective of this program evaluation study is not to draw conclusions on the success of the program through a comparison of the methods of instruction with the quantitative test and survey evaluation instruments. This type of evaluation can be done more effectively using an ethnographic research design to qualitatively analyse the discourses of instruction and the behaviours of participants (Mickan & Motteram, 2008). Instead, this study focuses on the following objectives:

- to evaluate the factors that contributed to and impinged upon the test readiness and confidence of the participants
- to identify issues with conducting test preparation in Papua associated with the physical learning environment in Papua.

**Pedagogical approach**

The preparation program was flexibly delivered in the sense that the outline could be changed as the program progressed to cater for the needs and wants of the learner cohort. This mode of delivery, accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation process, allowed an action-learning approach to be taken. This informed the *in situ* modification of the program in response to the various skills, knowledge, and English language development needs that surfaced over the program.

The main resources used during the program, *IELTS in Context: Book 1* (Carey, Ruston, & Scales, 2004) and *IELTS in Context: Book 2* (Carey, Ruston, & Wajnryb, 2005), were developed by one of the course instructors, the first author. *IELTS in Context Book 1* was used for the first two weeks of face-to-face instruction covered in this report and for the following three weeks of self-study before the candidates sat the test three weeks later. *IELTS in Context: Book 2* was provided as an additional resource for self-study up until the participants sat the test.

*IELTS in Context* was developed over three years of collecting, trialling and refining resources through action research. It is informed by the social constructivist theory of post-Vygotskian scholars in second language research (e.g., Lantolf and Thorne, 2006), privileging authentic texts within a Communicative Language Teaching Approach (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The curriculum design integrates test-taking
skills with contextualised topics. The course is designed to help students develop their communicative competence through the use of authentic texts such as listening materials taken from radio news programs by the Australian Broadcasting Commission and reading materials sourced from newspapers, magazines and books, reproduced with permission from the copyright holders.

Course activities are contextualised into weekly topic units and are designed to encourage pair and group work, requiring cooperation between learners. A focus on fluency tasks encourages learners to develop their confidence in speaking through roleplays. The course also contains judicious use of focus on form through grammar-, pronunciation- and vocabulary-focused activities. The coursebooks contain common cooperative and communicative tasks (Willis & Willis, 2008), e.g., jigsaw (split reading) tasks, structured discussions and dictoglosses that are repeated throughout the 16 topic units in both books. Sociolinguistic features such as sociocultural pragmatics, turn-taking, and discourse markers are included in speaking preparation materials to build confidence through providing strategies to deal with communication breakdowns and misunderstood/misheard examiner questions.

Another feature of this IELTS preparation course is the focus on building vocabulary in key topic areas to enable the participants to comprehend vocabulary they encounter in the reading and listening sections and to access and correctly use vocabulary in the writing and speaking sections. Without fluency, accuracy and predictive skills in vocabulary use, and vocabulary size and depth of understanding above a certain threshold – suggested by Nation (1993) and Adolphs and Schmitt (2003) to be 3000 word families to speak proficiently, 6,000-7,000 for listening – students cannot be expected to perform well in the IELTS.

As well as acquiring new vocabulary, past experience with the Papuan students showed it is often necessary to re-teach vocabulary that the participants had previously learnt incorrectly. The reason for incorrect vocabulary learning can be attributed to a number of factors, but the most common causes amongst Papuan students appear to be learning word lists solely by translation (when often there is no one-to-one relationship) and learning English words and expressions without a context provided (Nassaji, 2003). To maximise and consolidate the learning of new vocabulary, topics are sequenced to allow for a cohesive flow of themes and vocabulary from one topic to the next, e.g., Language – Education – Employment – and so on. This contextualised, cohesive approach to vocabulary learning in IELTS preparation provides opportunities for participants to ‘recycle’ vocabulary (Hayes & Watt, 1998) and to make lexical inferences to generate meanings for unknown words they encounter in context (Deschambault, 2012).
In the preparation program, test-taking skill development involved the sequential and scaffolded introduction of test skills integrated with the four language skills. An important strategy embedded in the design of the coursebooks is development of the skills to enable fluency and speed, delaying a focus on accuracy until after fluency and speed is attained. This approach was informed by studies on reflective and impulsive learning styles (Ehrman, 2003) that demonstrate that impulsive learners (those who do not monitor their accuracy as much) are more fluent. Reflective language learners tend not to develop fluency as they attend too heavily to their accuracy. A fluent student who makes relatively few careless errors is referred to as a ‘fast-accurate’ impulsive learner (Ehrman, 1996, 2003) and is the type of IELTS candidate who is likely to perform more successfully in production tasks.

The program

Participants

The participants were junior and senior high school English teachers: six males and eight females, competitively selected on merit by the provincial government (based on an interview with criteria of attitude, pedagogical knowledge and English proficiency). They were from different regions of the Province of Papua in Indonesia: Jayapura (n=7), Timika (n=4), Biak (n=2) and Merauke (n=1). All of them held undergraduate degrees from Universitas Cendrawasih (UNCEN) and were employed by the regional government bodies in their provinces as English teachers.

English skills needs analysis, assessment and feedback methods

Before commencing the program, a needs analysis was conducted to ascertain the targets for the participants’ English language and test-taking knowledge and skills development. Data collected during the previous 10-week TESOL methodology program at the University of the Sunshine Coast (Papuan Master English Teachers’ Program) were analysed to anticipate the participants’ language needs. The main areas identified for targeted development were writing, reading and listening, in that order, while speaking, their disproportionately most proficient skill, was also to be developed, but with a focus on maximising performance through test-taking strategies.

The reason for the initial focus on writing was that it had been identified previously as their weakest skill. During the Papuan Master English Teachers’ Program, an IELTS Task 2 writing task (a 250-word academic essay) was given to the participants, but the participants did not perform this task with a requisite level of proficiency to assess their writing above IELTS 2.0. None of the participants wrote more than 100 words in the 40 minutes allocated. This can be explained by the participants’ admission that they had never written an essay in English, nor had they been taught to write in this genre.
An initial face-to-face instruction component of the program was conducted in Jayapura, Papua over two weeks during which time the 14 participants took part in two major activities:

- IELTS test familiarity activities and development of the four English macro-skills and vocabulary through eight five-hour workshops and two hours homework per night

- IELTS practice tests, using retired specimen materials (Cambridge, 2009), conducted under IELTS test conditions on the first and second Friday of the course by a former IELTS examiner (the first author) and an accredited IELTS administrator and clerical marker (the second author)

Participants received group and individual feedback on their reading, listening, speaking and writing tests on the following Monday. After the face-to-face component of the program, two additional tests were provided for the participants to practise at home during the three-week period leading up to the official IELTS test.

Providing repeated test practice under exam conditions is controversial when the focus is on what Cohen (2006, p. 308) describes as candidates developing ‘test wiseness strategies (i.e., strategies for using knowledge of test formats and other peripheral information to answer test items without going through the expected linguistic and cognitive processes).’ However, as long as instruction does not involve showing participants ways to usurp the test format, practicing a small number of tests can provide familiarity with the format; without such practice, the lack of familiarity with the test might interfere with a test candidate’s linguistic performance.

In addition to the writing performed in the Friday practice tests, the participants submitted two writing tasks, weekly, written without test time constraints, during both the face-to-face and self-study periods of the program. During the three-week self-study period the participants emailed their writing to the instructors. The writing samples were returned to participants with coded feedback on language use and structure, that is, codes were used to annotate the texts with the type of error, rather than a correction of the error, allowing the participants to identify and correct the error themselves (Bitchener & Ferris, 2011). The participants were then required to resubmit each writing test after they corrected the coded feedback.

**Evaluation methods**

Several methods were used to evaluate the aforementioned program activities and other data collection techniques used in this study. The other techniques included observations of the physical learning environment and learner behaviour noted by the researchers, and a post-program participant questionnaire. A key method of
analysis of the practice tests involved critical reflection on the participants’ test-taking strategies, based on participants’ verbal self-reports and researcher observation (Cohen, 2006). The study objectives, data collection methods and analysis techniques used to evaluate the participants and the program are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Study objectives, data collection methods and analysis techniques used to evaluate the participants and the program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study objectives</th>
<th>Activities and data collection techniques</th>
<th>Methods of evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To evaluate the factors that contributed to and impinged upon the test readiness and confidence of the participants. | • Two IELTS practice tests were conducted at the end of Week 1 and Week 2;  
  • An official administration of the IELTS test was conducted three weeks after the face-to-face delivery of the program;  
  • A post-program participant questionnaire*.                                                            | • Critical reflection on test-taking strategies, based on participants’ self-reports and researcher observation;  
  • Analysis by comparison of the practice test results with the official test results;  
  • Analysis of the participants’ attitudes towards aspects of the program, their test readiness and confidence. |
| To identify issues with conducting test preparation in Papua associated with the physical learning environment in Papua. | • Observation of learning behaviours and physical conditions within the IELTS preparation classroom;  
  • Two IELTS practice tests conducted at the end of Week 1 and Week 2.                                              | • Analysis of how the physical learning environment impacts learner behaviour;  
  • Analysis of how the available facilities for test practice impact learner behaviour.                        |

Note: The questionnaire was written in English and Bahasa Indonesia and administered anonymously through the partner organisation (Willi Toisuta and Associates) support staff so that respondents felt confident and secure in responding truthfully (Appendix 1).

IELTS practice test results

The IELTS practice tests can only be viewed as indicative of the proficiency level of the participants at the commencement of the program as the tests were not official IELTS tests. More importantly, what the tests revealed was the relative strengths and weaknesses of the participants’ four macroskills and, based on participant verbal reports on their test-taking strategies and observations of the test administration, they also revealed issues with the participants’ approach to the test. Based on this, iterative modifications to the program could be made to cater for the issues that surfaced.
A comparison of the first and second IELTS practice tests suggested improvements in the groups’ overall IELTS scores (Table 2), with some statistically significant increases (Wilcoxon rank sums test) in listening (0.9 of a band; \( Z = -2.772; p < 0.05 \)) and reading (0.5 of a band; \( Z = -2.658; p < 0.05 \)). The participants’ speaking scores remained unchanged between the two tests. The group’s writing score increased by a mean 0.5 of a band, but it was not a statistically significant change. The first test and the ensuing group feedback session identified some areas for improvement, so extra face-to-face and homework tasks were devoted to writing to respond to student needs.

In particular, the participants had not applied the advice supplied regarding three important writing test strategies:

- attempt Task 2 of the writing first, as it is weighted more heavily
- structure the Task 2 essay in the Western style recommended to them
- spend 5 minutes planning the essay and 5 minutes proofreading for errors.

As shown in Table 2, significant overall improvement of 0.5 of a band score (from 4.5 to 5.0) was made by the participants between Practice Test 1 and Practice Test 2 (Wilcoxon signed ranks; \( Z = -2.585; p < 0.01 \)). Ten out of N=14 participants demonstrated an ability to achieve a global 5.0 IELTS in the second test. One participant scored a global 6.5 IELTS with a minimum of 6.0 in all sub-bands except for listening, which was a 5.0.

Table 2: Mean individual sub-skill and global IELTS scores and band score gains for the two practice tests and the official IELTS test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Practice Test 1</th>
<th>Practice Test 2</th>
<th>Official Test</th>
<th>Gain Practice 2 minus Practice 1</th>
<th>Gain Official minus Practice 2</th>
<th>Gain Official minus Practice 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IELTS official test results

Three weeks after sitting the second IELTS practice test, the participants sat the official IELTS test conducted by a visiting IELTS examiner from IALF Bali who ran the test in the same venue in Jayapura, Papua, in the Provincial Government office, with the same audio equipment as had been used for conducting the second practice test. The participants, who were predicted to score 5.0 or above based on their second
practice test, did actually perform as expected. Out of the four candidates who were not predicted to achieve a global score of 5.0, only two did not achieve a 5.0.

The candidates improved their listening and reading scores between the second practice test and the official IELTS test (Table 2), which contributed to a significant global mean improvement of 0.3 of a band score in the group between the second practice test and the official IELTS (Wilcoxon signed ranks; \( Z = -1.998; \ p < 0.05 \)). The overall improvement of 0.8 of a band score between the first practice test and the official IELTS test was also statistically significant (Friedman test; \( \chi^2 = 17.33, \ p < 0.001 \)). However, this comparison between the practice tests and official test needs to be viewed with caution.

**Test readiness and confidence**

The post program questionnaire revealed the majority of respondents (12) believed that they faced no communication barriers during the program. Two candidates stated that sometimes they had difficulties due to their lack of vocabulary. All of the candidates believed that their English had improved, as had their test-taking skills, albeit only slightly for the majority of participants, but the majority also perceived that they needed more time to prepare for the IELTS, preferably at USC in Australia, where immersion could assist in their development of English proficiency.

In relation to the participants’ perceived level of English and test-taking skills improvement, the majority of respondents reported that the program had improved their skills slightly in all areas in the two-week face-to-face component of the program (Figure 1). One participant believed that their speaking skills had improved a lot and one reported no development in their writing.
Figure 1: Participants’ perceived level of English skills improvement.

When asked what they predict their official IELTS scores would be (Figure 2), the majority (n=12) reported an expected global score of 5.0 with the lowest expected sub-band score being in listening and the highest score achievement in speaking. Two participants expected to achieve a score below 5.0 for reading and writing, and three expected a score below 5.0 for listening.

Figure 2: Participants’ prediction of their IELTS scores.
The participants were asked to rate the practice tests and each of the English language exercises and methods to ascertain their effectiveness in enhancing their preparation for the test (Figure 3). The majority rated these activities as excellent or good with the most highly rated activities being ones that focused on language development rather than test-taking skills and practice.

![Figure 3: Participants’ rating of the practice tests, skills exercises and methods.](image)

Finally, the participants were asked to estimate their perceived level of understanding and skills regarding the IELTS test format, assessment criteria, and test-taking strategies upon completion of the program (Figure 4). Thirteen out of 14 participants estimated their level of understanding and skills as moderate.
Discussion

Band score gain

A limitation of the study design is the face validity of the comparison made between the two IELTS practice tests of writing and speaking and the officially administered IELTS writing and speaking tests. The first author’s IELTS accreditation as a rater of writing and speaking had lapsed by several years, so there is a possibility that his ratings for these test components may not conform with current rater standards. However, the validity of the two IELTS practice reading and listening sections is not as compromised because the tests were official IELTS tests that had been retired recently and they were administered and marked by a then accredited IELTS administrator and clerical marker (the second author). In addition, the second practice test and the official test were conducted in the same venue, using the same device to play the listening materials to ensure the validity of the test construct, so the statistically significant global gain of 0.3 between the second practice test and the official test can be considered as the most valid measure of gain. However, these results should still be interpreted with caution because the band score gain found in this comparatively short 60-hour program (40 hours face-to-face plus 20 hours of homework and an additional unknown number of self-study hours over three weeks) is slightly larger
than studies of band score gain solely using official tests commissioned by IELTS.

The first study of IELTS band score gain (Brown, 1998) found that nine IELTS
preparation participants gained an average of 0.9 of a band on the Academic Writing
module (from 4.3 to 5.2) in 10 weeks. In 2002, the IELTS partners set an enduring
often cited benchmark in the industry when they recommended that ‘... individuals
can take up to 200 hours to improve by one IELTS band’ (IELTS, 2002, p. 22) but they
also cautioned that this rate of band score gain was affected by learner characteristics
such as age, motivation, first language and educational background and gains were
said to vary with level of proficiency.

A larger scale study commissioned by IELTS (Elder & O’Loughlin, 2003) with
112 participants from four institutions, totalling between 100 and 120 hours of
preparation reported an average gain of 0.6 of a band score. The results suggested
that ‘for both the global score and for each of the separate sub-skills it is easier
to move up from one step to another at the lower end of the IELTS rating scale’
(p. 226). Another IELTS-commissioned study by Green (2005) found, for the writing
component of IELTS, that the ‘200 hour equals one band score’ recommendation
could not be upheld. Green found that the amount of time spent on test preparation
is an unreliable predictor of band score gain. Both the Green (2005) and Elder and
O’Loughlin (2003) studies concluded that lower-level participants made faster gains
than higher-level participants, suggesting that above IELTS 6.0, it is more difficult
for participants to make fast progress through intensive preparation. This suggests
that gains could have been made by the Papuan participants from sub-5.0 up to 5.0
in this short, intensive program, but it would take much longer to achieve an IELTS
of 6.5. The experience of the participants in this study who went on to study at IALF
Bali is that the gain they needed to reach IELTS 6.5 for entry into a master’s course
required more than the 6 months (for entry at 5.5) or 9 months (for entry at 5.0) of
PCE allotted as part of the AAS.

Test readiness and strategies

Taken together, the survey responses in Figures 1 to 4 suggest that after the two week
face-to-face component of the preparation program, most of the participants felt
confident in their ability to achieve IELTS 5.0. However, issues with the participants’
test-taking strategies were still observed during the second practice test, so these
issues were discussed with the participants during feedback sessions.

A feature of the IELTS reading and listening tests is that careful attention to detail is
required with regards to spelling, grammar, and word choice; an answer that may
be substantively correct will be marked wrong if there are any errors in these areas.
Many participants lost marks for poor spelling, wrong grammatical forms (e.g.,

VOLUME 29 NO 2  ENGLISH AUSTRALIA JOURNAL  33
using the singular instead of the plural), and adding superfluous information. Some participants also failed to heed or misinterpreted test instructions (e.g., ‘Write NO MORE than TWO words’) or made errors in copying their answers from the test paper to the answer sheet.

An issue specific to listening was the tendency for participants to rely on ‘bottom-up’ processing skills, instead of activating ‘top-down’ schema during the introduction to each part of the listening test. The participants remarked that this strategy, over-reliant on listening for key words contained in the listening test question, was one that was ‘drilled into them’ and they also taught it as the main strategy for their students to prepare for the National English Language Test, which consists solely of a reading comprehension test. Other factors also impacted on participants’ listening results: the tendencies for participants to make errors that can be attributed variously to a lack of vocabulary, the failure to apply their knowledge of spelling and grammar to produce the correct forms of words on answer sheets, and insufficient attention to the details of the test format.

The participants had consistently lower scores in the skills of reading and writing compared to speaking. This is in line with international comparative literacy tests conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004), which has noted that the level of reading and writing literacy within Indonesia is well below the mean of OECD countries.

The physical learning environment in Papua
The participants self-identified listening as the skill that was most difficult to improve upon. It was also a difficult skill to work on in the teaching environment in Papua, given the amount of ambient noise and the poor acoustics in the teaching room because it contained hard reflective surfaces such as tiles instead of carpet. This is presumably more suited to the dominant teacher-centred transmission style of teaching adopted in Papuan schools, where essentially, only one person speaks at a time and most often that person is the teacher. While the participants could hear the instructors thanks to the use of microphones, it was impossible for the participants to listen to other participants’ comments, unless they were sitting close by. This made it virtually impossible to have whole class discussions and discouraged participants from working collectively.

It also proved difficult to find a room that was suitable as a test environment. The teaching room was unsuitable because of its size, the tile flooring, and position near to the road, which caused ambient sound to reverberate and created a high signal to noise ratio. The first practice test was held in a more acoustically dampened language lab of a local school, but this was also unsatisfactory because of the level
of external noise and the setup of the room, which did not meet IELTS regulations regarding the provision of adequate writing space for the candidates and supervisory access for the exam invigilator.

The second practice test was held in the Papuan provincial government building; while not a conventional exam space, it did at least provide a quiet environment, although it would be necessary to inform those usually in the vicinity that an exam is in progress so that no interruptions occur. Following the recommendations from this program, the location for the official IELTS test was also conducted in the Papuan provincial government building.

**Conclusions**

This paper has evaluated factors that contributed to and impinged upon the success of an IELTS preparation program held in Papua in July 2010. The strategy of providing practice tests under mock IELTS test conditions is not one sanctioned by IELTS. However, it provided the participants with an authentic experience of the test and the results and feedback provided have contributed positively to the participants’ self-assessed test readiness and confidence. These tests also provided the program convenors with a clear picture of the participants’ needs, which translated to the ability to tweak the program input in a timely manner. The participants’ survey feedback on the course materials provided descriptive data indicating that these materials assisted in the development of the participants’ test readiness and confidence.

These factors alone have not been the sole contributors to the successful outcomes and impact of this project. At the time of writing, 7 out of the 12 program participants who scored IELTS 5.0 have received scholarships. One of these participants graduated from the Master of TESOL Education in 2012, two others graduated in semester 1 2013 and four are currently enrolled in this program. The participants, who were selected on merit of being motivated teachers and language learners, have demonstrated substantial perseverance over the past three years to start from a base of not being able to write a 250-word IELTS essay to graduating from an Australian university with a master’s degree.

The program revealed some important insights for English language teachers planning to provide offshore test preparation in a remote developing country. First, it is important to gather as much information as possible about the participants, not only about their base English proficiency, but also about each individual participant’s level of motivation, previous language learning experiences – particularly their preferred learning styles, as elicited in the post-program questionnaire, and the
obstacles present in the physical learning environment. While we had some idea of these factors through our contact with the Pauans when they studied with us previously in Australia, we were not completely prepared for the challenges that confronted us. Second, we found that the flexibly delivered, dual teaching strategies of communicative language activities and test practice under mock IELTS conditions were particularly well-received and effective in providing the test readiness and confidence the participants required to reach their learning goals, and the requirement of IELTS 5.0.

In recognition of the difficulties faced by aspiring ADS applicants in remote areas, since this program ran, ADS Indonesia has introduced the English Language Training Assistance (ELTA) program (http://australiaawardsindo.or.id/) in four priority provinces of Indonesia, including that of Papua. The ELTA program is open to all eligible candidates who have an IELTS-equivalent proficiency of 4.5 to 5.0.

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REFERENCES


APPENDIX 1

Papuan IELTS Preparation Program Survey, June-July 2010

Post-course questionnaire
Tujuan angket ini untuk mendapatkan gambaran tentang perkembangan belajar bapak/ibu sekalian setelah mengikuti program ini. Jawablah pertanyaan di bawah ini sejujurnya dengan memberi tanda V atau mengisi jawaban secara lengkap agar kami dapat memberikan layanan yang lebih baik di masa mendatang.

The purpose of this questionaire is to get a picture of the development of your study after taking part in the program. Answer the questions below honestly by putting a tick V or filling out a complete response so that we can provide the best service possible in future programs and courses.

1. Jenis Kelamin (gender)
   - Laki-laki (male)
   - Perempuan (female)

2. Umur (age)
   - 19-22
   - 23-29
   - 30-44
   - 45-64
   - 65 tau lebih (or older)

3. Pendidikan tertinggi yang telah diselesaikan? (the highest education level achieved)
   - Diploma (diploma)
   - Sarjana (BA)
   - Sarjana Muda (3 years diploma)
   - Pasca Sarjana (postgraduate)

4. Berapa lama anda menjadi guru?________ tahun (length of teaching experience)

5. Apa jabatan anda sekarang?(your present post)
   - Guru bidang studi (classroom teacher)
   - Guru inti (coordinating teacher)
   - Pengawas (supervisor)
   - Kepala sekolah (principal)
   - Lainnya (others): ___________________________________________________
6. Bagaimanakah tingkat kemampuan IELTS anda setelah mengikuti program ini?  

(General level of IELTS skills improvement after taking part in the program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ketrampilan (skills)</th>
<th>Sangat Bagus (a lot)</th>
<th>Bagus (some)</th>
<th>Sedang (slight)</th>
<th>Kurang (not at all)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Test taking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Bila discore, berapa nilai yang mungkin anda peroleh saat Test IELTS nanti? (scorenya adalah 1 - 9)  

(What band scores do you predict you will get in the IELTS test? (1-9))

8. Menurut anda, bagaimana dengan aspek-aspek yang anda miliki setelah mengikuti kegiatan ini?  

(How would you rate the following aspects of the program)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ketrampilan (skills)</th>
<th>Sangat bagus (excellent)</th>
<th>Bagus (good)</th>
<th>Cukup (fair)</th>
<th>Kurang sekali (poor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Course book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Support from teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teaching facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accommodation facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Berikan komentar lain apabila diperlukan  

(Please provide some additional comments if you have any)

10. Bagaimanakah menurut anda efektifitas program dari masing-masing aspek dibawah ini?  

(How would you rate the effectiveness of the following aspects of the program?)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ketrampilan (skills)</th>
<th>Sangat bagus (excellent)</th>
<th>Bagus (good)</th>
<th>Cukup (fair)</th>
<th>Kurang sekali (poor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IELTS practice tests (on Fridays)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS practice reading exercises</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 1 writing (graph/process description) practice exercises</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2 writing (essay) practice exercises</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS Speaking test practice exercises</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS Listening practice exercises</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary exercises</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictoglosses</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Split readings</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Berikan komentar lain apabila diperlukan

(Please provide some additional comments if you have any)

12. Bagaimanakah tingkat ketrampilan anda saat ini di bidang berikut ini

(currently perceived level of mastery in....)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-assessment of your knowledge, understanding, and skills related to:</th>
<th>Ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. The IELTS test format</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. IELTS test assessment criteria</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. IELTS test taking strategies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Catatan (Note):

1-2 = kurang (little knowledge/skills)

3 = cukup (enough knowledge/skills)

4-5 = banyak (A lot of knowledge/skills)

13. Apakah anda mengalami kesulitan komunikasi selama mengikuti kegiatan ini?

(Did you face any communication difficulties during the course?)
☐ Ya, Alasan (why): 

☐ Tidak, Alasan (why): 

14. Apakah anda merasa program ini sesuai dengan harapan anda? 

(Do you think that this course has met your expectations?)

☐ Ya, Alasan: 

☐ Tidak, Alasan: 

15. Bidang pembahasan apa saja yang anda sarankan untuk kegiatan ini? Sebutkan kalau ada (What additional topic areas would you suggest for this training, if any?)

16. Mohon masukan/ komentar yang dapat menguatkan atau meningkatkan program ini (Please provide any suggestions that would help us strengthen or improve this program)

17. Berikan komentar lain apabila diperlukan (Please provide some additional comments if you have any)

Michael Carey teaches and researches in TESOL, pronunciation, academic writing and language testing. At the University of the Sunshine Coast he is Program Leader for the Master’s in TESOL Education and the Combined Secondary Education program. He also supervises Master’s and PhD research students in various fields of linguistics.

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Ann Robertson has over twenty years’ experience in second languages education (TESOL and Japanese as a Foreign Language) and teacher professional development. Her current work includes lecturing in undergraduate Language and Linguistics courses and designing and writing programs and proposals for the International Projects Group at USC.

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