# INTRODUCTION

Methodology in English language education needs to be appropriate to the social context within which is it to be used (Holliday 1994). Contrary to this, Communicative Language Teaching has been promoted throughout Confucian Heritage Culture countries, in settings quite dissimilar to where it originated.

Different cultures of learning, however, are not mutually exclusive but can be reconciled or interwoven (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996).

As CHC learners have a proven record of academic success internationally (Watkins and Biggs, 1996; Volet, 1999), they will continue to derive benefits from the traditional methods of language learning that they are accustomed to. At the same time there is a need to attend to the fluency and communicative competence that is assessed in current proficiency tests such as IELTS, but is lacking in more traditional CHC classrooms.

As a proficiency test, IELTS is a broad measure of language ability. Though exam- taking strategies can contribute in some small part to success, a well-designed IELTS preparation course needs to primarily target development of language skills and fluency and to a much lesser degree focus on exam strategies.

In this paper, a carefully considered selection of techniques provides a fusion of traditional CHC approaches and contemporary international views on teaching beneficial for IELTS preparation and beyond in a CHC context.

# THE FUSION

In order to successfully select and adapt techniques for IELTS preparation in a CHC setting, we need to consider the learning tradition of Confucian Heritage culture. Ting (1999) describes how, historically, Chinese education was organized around the Confucian classics, which students had to memorize, recite and explain. The four basic concepts of learning in the Confucian tradition are memorization,

understanding, reflecting and questioning, where thinking and understanding reinforce one another in the process of learning.

“Learning is reciting. If we recite it, then think it over, think it over, then recite it, naturally it‟ll become meaningful to us. If we recite it but don‟t think it over, we still won‟t appreciate its meaning. If we think it over but don‟t recite it, even though we might understand it, our understanding will be precarious.” (Chu, 1990)

The concepts of memorization, understanding, reflecting and questioning are part of the traditional CHC influences that inform our fusion of techniques for IELTS preparation for CHC learners. We define „fusion‟ as a synergy of traditional and contemporary theory and teaching techniques, predicated on the proficiency needs of CHC learners. This is based on our belief that such combination leads to more efficient learning and higher levels of fluency than a single reliance on either of these approaches. Our model derives from a review of current theory and research, experience of IELTS in New Zealand and China, and work with teachers in Beijing and Jiangsu Province, China.

The fusion model has four key components:

* Interaction within and outside the class to generate fluency
* Interest in topics to motivate interaction and learning
* Integration to provide context and maximize efficiency
* Techniques to combine model based memorizing and analysis, and skills based fluency development.

# MEMORIZATION AND MODELS

In our approach to IELTS preparation for CHC learners, we incorporate the tradition of memorizing as a deep processing technique for committing learned language to long-term memory. For this, models are used widely and in a range of ways, with *model* defined as a fine example of a piece of writing or speaking, which learners can memorize, process, understand, and reflect upon.

While memorization is seen as a significant part of learning in CHC tradition, it is sometimes mistaken for rote learning. Biggs (1996) describes memorization common to CHC as a deep strategy, where students learn by repetition to ensure accurate recall of understood information. Since repetitive learning is a way of coming to understand, there is a focus on meaning, and the information can be transformed.

Rote learning, on the other hand, is a surface and mechanical learning strategy without due regard to meaning. As a consequence, learners are able to reproduce the information without understanding it sufficiently to reformulate it in a different context.

Marton, Dall‟Alba, and Kun (1996) explain how repetitive learning can facilitate learning:

“When you repeat, you get stuck at certain points. These are points of difficulty (structure, topic change, sentence connection) and need further attention. Each repetition brings some new idea of understanding. Different aspects are focused on with each repetition, deepening understanding”

Memorization of models forces learners to attend to every detail in the text, to how words join together and function as meaning units (Ting, 1999). These memorized meaning units are then available for manipulation and use in the learners‟ own output in speech and writing. Skehan (1998) shows how working memory processes (i.e. matching, feedback comprehension, and recombination) lead the learner towards a rule-based perspective which is more likely to lead to longer-term change.

# TRANSLATION

Translation has played a major part in the teaching of English in the traditional CHC classroom. This method has for some seemed outmoded, despite the significant contributions it makes to language learning. Popovic (2001) claims that it now seems “that the general attitude towards translation has begun to change: those who touch upon it unanimously profess that translation is a legitimate pedagogic tool especially in an EFL environment, and that it deserves to be rehabilitated.” The Fusion model recognises the benefits translation offers to learners and seeks to balance this with a range of techniques that broadens their approach to language learning.

In the Fusion, translation is viewed as an efficient way of conveying and clarifying meaning by working within the knowledge context of the learner, who can process accurately (with the guidance of the teacher) language that may otherwise remain obscure. Contrastive analysis allows the learner to perceive similarities and differences between the L1 and L2, and thereby develop a framework for understanding the target language. Not surprisingly, translation tends to be the preferred strategy for learners, as most have an inherent need to identify the equivalent meaning in L1. When applied to lexical chunks rather than individual words, translation can be an effective route to understanding new language.

Gabrielatos (2002) describes how translation can be used to help learners:

* realise that there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between items in the two cultures/languages
* realise that the two cultures/languages may express similar items in different ways
* become aware of differences in register, and the importance of appropriacy
* become aware of the importance of collocation

However, when translation is overused or decontextualised, it tends to create reliance on L1 as the mediator of expression. Learners may come to think of language as directly translatable and remain closed to the nuances that thinking in the new language brings. H. D. Brown (1994) maintains that L1 interference is, on balance, a negative contributor to language learning. Thus, if translation is to be used well, it needs to judiciously contribute to meaning and language awareness without becoming an impediment to the development of fluency.

# ACCURACY VERSUS FLUENCY

In traditional CHC classrooms, there is an emphasis on accuracy (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996), which results from the CHC approach to learning and the influence of the Grammar-Translation and Audio-lingual methods. This emphasis may be given further weight by the relative ease with which inaccuracy can be identified and corrected and the inherently greater challenge there is in generating fluency.

Communicative Language Teaching values fluency and communicative ability ahead of grammar rules and accuracy, but an over-reliance on this approach leaves deficiency in language accuracy. A suitable approach, in our view, is one of balance, with a rotating or combined focus on both accuracy and fluency in activities.

An emphasis on accuracy has tended in a CHC context to go hand in hand with analytical bottom-up processing and this brings significant benefits for learners.

However, by focusing to a great degree on individuated components of a text, learners tend to process slowly, and lose extended text opportunities to create meaning.

Contemporary views see comprehension as drawing upon both top-down and bottom- up processing, in what is known as interactive processing (Paran, 1997).

CHC learners require ample opportunities to produce a high volume of communicatively focused language without overt expectations of accuracy. It is unlikely, given the constraints on time in school or university classes, and the benefits that derive from form-focussed class-work, that adequate time is available in class for sufficient fluency training. In-class fluency practice therefore needs to be complemented by extensive skills development out-of-class.

# AWARENESS RAISING

In order to improve language ability rather than merely promote exam skills, we see awareness raising activities as essential for all the four sub-skills in an IELTS preparation course. In a CHC context of learning, there has traditionally been a focus on the product rather than on the process involved in getting there. In order to make learners aware of the strategies involved in development of the skill, these need to be explicitly taught, explained and discussed. The rationale and objective of class activities addressing strategy development should be emphasised. Simply put, learners need to know what they are doing and why, in order to choose the most effective approach for the task at hand, and to transfer their skills to situations beyond the classroom.

Learners also need to be provided with ample opportunities to notice the mechanics of the language, i.e. features of the target language to be acquired, what gaps exist in their own interlanguage, and differences and similarities between L1 and L2, etc.

This is supported by recent research in the field of language learning, which stresses the importance of noticing linguistic forms for language acquisition (Schmidt, 1995; Ellis, 1997; Thornbury, 1997).

The grammar-translation methodology used in CHC language learning associates conscious learning with explicit formal knowledge of linguistic features. Noticing as a technique also combines well with some of the learning styles prevalent in CHC, and provides an opportunity to extend traditional CHC techniques, such as the use of models and translation, in order for learners to analyse their own output and thereby heighten their awareness of the target language. Two common types of activities which provide opportunities for noticing are reconstruction and reformulation.

In reconstruction activities, such as dictogloss or damaged texts, learners listen to or read an IELTS model text, which is then removed. Learners attempt to reconstruct the text, individually or in pairs/groups, and then compare their output to the original input, taking note of similarities and differences. In the matching stage learners focus on form and consciously register some of their own “gaps” in their interlanguage.

This shows learners what they have not yet learned, and what they need to focus their attention on.

Reformulation, or recasting, is a way of supplying learners with corrective feedback in production of writing and speaking. Lyster and Ranta (1997) define recasting as “the teacher‟s reformulation of all or part of a learner‟s utterance minus the error.”

The reformulation becomes a model, provided after production rather than beforehand, helping learners notice especially those areas they found problematic in their first attempt.

# INTERACTION

One of the challenges facing the CHC IELTS preparation classroom is how to develop communicative ability and fluency. A way to address this is to explore how to use interaction patterns to improve fluency within the constraints of large classes.

Traditionally the CHC interaction pattern has tended to be teacher-student, with a more recent move to pair work in class. Foster (1998, cited in Richards, 2002) suggests that dyad work is optimal in developing accuracy as well as fluency. When this is matched with preview and pre-planning, the gains from pair work are significant.

The pair work advantage does not need to be confined to the classroom. A „study buddy‟ system promotes pair work outside class, through emails, telephone chats, journal dialogues, collaborative homework, and taped conversation; all of which can move forward or back on a cline from fluency to accuracy with learners taking opportunities to act as the monitor of their own and their partner‟s language. Partners can also drill each other in the target language and check vocabulary.

Interaction is, of course, not confined to speaking and should be extended to include listening (jigsaw listening, pair conversation taping); reading (jigsaw reading, IELTS- type question-writing for texts for partners, previewing and explaining/summarizing

to partner); and writing (informal diary exchanges, peer editing, response to content via journals, collaborative planning and writing).

Notwithstanding the advantages of dyad work, there is a requirement in IELTS preparation classes to familiarise learners with the exchanges that occur in the listening module. Monologue delivery may be best attended to by taped examples in addition to learner prepared talks*.* Exchanges that occur between up to four people can be mirrored by broadening the interaction patterns in the class. This group work not only has the benefit of contextualizing for the learners some of the features found in the test, but also provides the variety that is key to creating interest.

# INTEREST

The IELTS preparation class needs to operate within the constraints of material suited to the IELTS test. This may mean that on a number of occasions the topic itself is not of intrinsic interest to some or all of the class. With variety in tasks and interaction patterns, it is possible to generate interest in the content and language of the subject material. This variety in task can achieve interest by the range of sometimes unexpected tasks students are asked to perform, and the degree to which they are asked to be personally involved in the processing of the material.

The teacher can also create interest through establishing rapport, using humour, body language and variety in intonation patterns. Outside class, learner interest can be catered for through extensive reading and listening.

# INTEGRATION

The benefits of integration work on a number of levels, and though there are quite marked limitations on how much skill integration can be achieved in a 40-minute class, given the gains in efficiency in the classroom it should not be discarded lightly. An imbalance in IELTS band scores in Listening for Chinese learners, for example, is indicative of the need to recover from the earlier lack of integration in the high school syllabus. Skills integration may go some way to achieving this. When we thematically connect the skills central to exam success, available benefits of integration are:

* + input providing language and content for output
  + review and commitment to long-term memory
  + opportunities for rhetorical transformation
  + catering to a range of different learning styles

# IELTS PREPARATION

IELTS preparation classes are often geared towards test familiarity and exam strategies, with content and activities based on practice tests from a range of sources. For success in IELTS, test-taking preparation does, of course, play a role. Hughes (1993) points out that “If any aspect of (any) test is unfamiliar to candidates, they are likely to perform less well than they would do otherwise”. An effective course therefore needs to make clear to learners the format of the test, i.e. timing, instructions, and question types, as well as the requirements. Learners also need to be made aware of general exam strategies that will enhance their chances of success,

such as improving their learning techniques, and organising their study time, in addition to receiving advice on what to do in the time leading up to and on the day of the exam.

However, the main focus of the course should be on the development of proficiency in the areas of listening, reading, writing and speaking, through balanced attention to both accuracy and fluency, with integration of skills as an organising principle.

# VOCABULARY

Vocabulary in IELTS is tested in all the four modules. Without sufficient lexical resource learners will have very significant difficulty in reading efficiently, decoding the listening and expressing themselves in the Writing and Speaking modules. Nation (1990) suggests that readers need to recognise 95% of the vocabulary in an average text to guess meaning from context. Prior to an IELTS course, it may therefore be a necessary prerequisite for learners to have memorised lower level vocabulary, as in the General Service List (GSL) (West, 1953). When learners move on to processing the more advanced vocabulary in IELTS related topics, straightforward memorising is no longer sufficient. At a higher level there is an increasing need for learners to develop sensitivity to meaning as mediated by context, and this skill arises through a more comprehensive approach to learning vocabulary.

When learners‟ notions of vocabulary include the types of lexis identified by Lewis (1997) (words, polywords, collocations or word partnerships, institutionalized

utterances, sentence frames and heads, and text frames), this extends their understanding of how meaning is created.

The more traditional CHC approach to vocabulary relies on providing texts and models as a contextualised frame for exploring word meaning in translation and analysis. Such a frame, when memorised, allows the language analysed to be more readily used at a later date by the learner (Skehan, 1980). Automaticity of the large vocabulary range required for the fluency tested in IELTS does not arise from a focus on explicit study of relatively few texts, but needs to be combined with extensive reading and listening.

## Techniques that can be applied to learning vocabulary

* For efficient processing of lexis, learners are provided with a list of questions that cover synonymy, word form, register, phonology, translation and so on. This list is used when the learners are both previewing readings and reviewing vocabulary and emphasizes making judgement on meaning from context and processing beyond the standard “What does … mean?”
* Learners are asked to memorize new language in context and review it regularly with the aid of the question list.
* Pre-viewing tasks can take the form of processing vocabulary both in the text and in the questions which are to be applied to the text.
* Learners are required to translate language in chunks rather than word-for- word, providing both a more accurate assessment of meaning and a more extended chunk of language for future use in speaking and writing.
* Vocabulary is integrated into listening and learners asked to analyse the transcript post-listening for vocabulary that affected the accuracy of their answers.

To avoid a preoccupation with closely defining the meaning of all language encountered, learners are also encouraged to read and listen in broader contexts to material that is interesting but linguistically not too challenging. The gains in fluency are pointed out to the learners so they are aware of the rationale for extensive skills practice.

# READING

Reading tasks that have tended to predominate in the teaching of IELTS preparation include: previewing of text for vocabulary, structures and meaning; instruction on test taking techniques; answering a range of question types; and feedback and analysis by the teacher. The previewing tasks allow for learning according to individual needs and pace (though within a relatively restricted task range) while class time is used efficiently for instruction, explanation and clarification. Memorization in conjunction with this analysis serves to highlight for the learner areas which are linguistically challenging. This interplay of memory and analysis of vocabulary and structures deepens understanding and makes the language analysed more readily available for future use. This may contribute to the automatised bottom-up processing that Paran (1997) maintains characterises fluent readers.

Reading fluency is however more than text analysis and test taking techniques. The high reading rate that is displayed by fluent readers results from extensive reading practice and a vocabulary awareness that facilitates reading with ease. An emphasis on analysis and technique reduces speed and the opportunity to generate meaning across extended text. Sustained silent reading, on the other hand, is valuable not only for developing vocabulary but developing reading proficiency and language acquisition in general (Grabe, 1991; Krashen, 1993, cited in Van Duzer, 1999). In short, to be good readers learners need to read extensively. This seems most likely when the learner is able to read in his or her own interest area and to do so outside class time.

## A Fusion approach to achieving reading accuracy and fluency requires

* A broad range of reading tasks for skill development and test familiarity
* A balance of top-down and bottom-up processing
* An awareness of reading strategies
* Extensive fluency work
* Learner interest

## Techniques to achieve this:

The Fusion incorporates various techniques where learners work collaboratively on questions to increase awareness of skills tested and strategies that can be used. As part of the prediction stage, learners write „wh‟-questions for the passage, and read the text to find the answers. After reading, learners write IELTS-type questions, e.g. paragraph headings for parts of the text, to be answered by their partner in class or as homework. A variation is for the teacher or learners to write answers, for which they then go on to write the questions. For a focus on the whole text, learners respond to

opinion based questions on a passage set in class e.g. “Do you agree/disagree with an opinion expressed?”, “Can you derive any moral from the text?”, “Did you enjoy it - why/why not?”

Grammatical items with a high impact on meaning, such as modals and adverbials, are highlighted and analysed in relation to questions. In a competitive activity, the teacher calls out tense, verb pattern, noun forms etc. which learners scan the text to identify. Potentially problematic structures such as „that‟-clauses can then be analysed and memorised. Opportunities to heighten awareness and broaden lexical range are created when learners find synonyms for words in the questions or rephrase questions while retaining meaning.

For strategy development and awareness the teacher and learners identify appropriate strategies before or after answering questions, with rationale for choices discussed.

Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984) is introduced through modelling, where the teacher demonstrates how to use the strategies of questioning, summarizing, clarifying and predicting. These help learners to construct meaning from text and monitor their own reading comprehension, with flexible use of the strategies outside class as the goal. To build confidence and strategy awareness in test taking situations the class does a timed reading of an IELTS practice text which has not been pre-read. Learners record the time taken, percentage of correct answers and the strategies used.

Extensive skill development can be included by learners choosing a book, magazine or reader which they find interesting and easy. They read their choice out of class and tell their partner something about it at a designated time.

# LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Challenges for IELTS Listening and Speaking range from how these skills are taught to the quality of materials and voice models available for work in class, and the quantity available for extensive skill development outside class.

The approach to how listening is taught has tended to be: generate interest, listen to the tape, answer the questions, listen to the answer explained by the teacher and analyse the vocabulary and structures. This may reflect what a fluent listener does, i.e.:

* determines a reason for listening;
* takes the raw speech and deposits an image of it in short-term memory;
* attempts to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event (conversation, lecture, radio ad) and the function of the message (persuade, inform, request);
* predicts information expected to be included in the message;
* recalls background information (schemata) to help interpret the message;
* assigns a meaning to the message;
* checks that the message has been understood;
* determines the information to be held in long-term memory;
* deletes the original form of the message that had been received into short-term memory

(Brown 1994; Dunkel, 1986, cited in Van Duzer, 1997).

This, however, does not address the key skill of learning how to decode sound

features in a listening text. Richards (1983) proposes that to understand what is heard a listener has to:

* retain chunks of language in short-term memory
* discriminate among the distinctive sounds in the new language
* recognize stress and rhythm patterns, tone patterns, intonational contours.
* recognize reduced forms of words
* distinguish word boundaries
* recognize typical word-order patterns
* recognize vocabulary
* detect key words, such as those identifying topics and ideas
* guess meaning from context
* recognize grammatical word classes
* recognize basic syntactic patterns
* recognize cohesive devices
* detect sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, prepositions, and the like

In a majority of EFL classes, the sound awareness that provides the basis of skilled listening has been shifted to the speaking or pronunciation class and broader text awareness has been placed in reading and writing classes. Not surprisingly, learners have difficulty in connecting the acoustic blur of normal everyday spontaneous speech with the language they learn in reading and writing and the tidy forms taught by teachers and overly scripted tapes (Cauldwell, 2002). It should be noted that this deficit is not peculiar to the CHC classroom, but tends to be the case in more internationalised classes as well.

A combined approach to listening and speaking in the CHC classroom must therefore take into account how to redress the shortfall in how these skills are taught and also how voice models are used in the class. While recognising the complexity of IELTS listening and speaking skills and the necessity of a comprehensive approach to teaching them, the Fusion starts with the assumption that the provision and processing of good voice models is an essential step in building both listening and speaking skills.

This model begins, as would a more standard approach, with the integration of listening, reading and speaking, through topic or text-type. Schemata is activated and interest generated in the topic to enhance motivation. For further discoursal clues, the context is established on a cultural as well as interpersonal level. The questions are then examined and discussed with regards to meaning, and learners endeavour to paraphrase by generating synonyms, superordinates, antonyms and so on. To raise awareness of the listening process and task approach, suitable strategies such as prediction, identifying key words etc. are discussed and agreed upon and then implemented. At this point the listening takes a different approach with the learners applying a set of questions which analyse phonological features to an introductory part of the listening text, with guidance and feedback from the teacher. In pairs students emulate the voice on the tape and compare their production with the original, using the same set of questions. This is a crucial stage which serves as the basis for the development of the skill of decoding spoken language. Once this is completed, learners are ready to do the listening practice and record results. As the next step, learners are supplied with the tapescript with answers highlighted. The tape is played again and learners asked to „finger follow‟ the text and read out loud at the same pace as the recording. They are asked to copy the voice sound staying as close as to

possible to the sound features they identified in the earlier set of questions. Post- class, learners analyse the tapescript further for items of lexical and functional interest, and apply the vocabulary question list to items of language they found relevant, interesting or challenging.

This approach combines a top-down approach to the listening with a bottom-up approach to decoding sound, and a transfer of this awareness to the students‟ own production. If learners have access to language laboratories, they go on to record their own voices on a similar topic and analyse their own or their partner‟s production using the same set of sound feature questions as in the listening. Memorizing and re- recording based on the analysis is used to boost confidence and awareness, as well as to improve skill.

Alternative approaches to the teaching of listening and speaking are necessary with pronunciation work as part of speaking skills and controlled and freer practice incorporated into class work. The approach to speaking in the CHC class has tended to be overly controlled but the alternative of extended fluency practice may not have as much benefit as was once supposed. Richards (2002) and Willis (1996) note that in spontaneous fluency-focused communication learners have little time to reflect on the language and their production may be marked by low levels of linguistic accuracy.

They both suggest pre-planning as a way of reconciling fluency work with the concern for acceptable levels of grammatical accuracy. Through planning of linguistic content, higher levels of accuracy can be achieved, while preparation of the content is beneficial for fluent production. Activities which, therefore, explain and model use result in more frequent use of desired target language during performance.

Speaking models also offer rich opportunities for analysis of content, language and strategies, followed by memorization and transfer. An awareness of the requirements for success in the IELTS Speaking module needs to be developed, especially in the areas of functional language and coherence/cohesion.

As in other skills, the key to fluency in listening and speaking lies in extensive skills development. Again, learners choose material based on interest and ease from a broad range of genre, texts (non/authentic) and types (monologues, dialogues, unplanned, semi-planned, planned). In CHC countries, the availability of materials for this is increasing with the access to the Internet, TV/Radio news and documentaries in English, “talking books”, films, songs etc.

# WRITING

In preparation of CHC learners for the IELTS Writing Module, there is a need to attend to fulfilment of task requirements with respect to suitable content, accuracy in grammar and vocabulary and the development of fluency and communicative ability.

## The Fusion use of models

Model answers to IELTS Writing tasks can be used in a variety of ways. In controlled models, less creativity is demanded from the learner, who instead manipulates language provided in activities such as ordering paragraphs, adding topic or supportive sentences to paragraphs, or filling gaps with suitable semantic or cohesive linkers or lexical/grammatical elements. This is followed by close analysis of the text

(grammar, lexis, organization, content, style etc), translation and memorization. As a final step the learners write a similar essay on a similar topic.

In freer use of models, the learner also analyses and memorizes the text, and then, on the basis of this, produces a similar text on a different topic. When models are provided before production, reversed planning helps identify the content, organisation and structure of the text. Translation and retranslation can more explicitly address features of the text type, register as well as contrastive analysis of organisational patterns, choice of vocabulary and structures.

Johnson (1988, cited in Thornbury 1997) argues that exposing learners to the behaviour after the event has greater psychological validity than providing the model beforehand. Models provided after production can serve as a basis for comparison of content and planning, analysis, and awareness raising, including noticing strategies that the learners can apply independently.

## Techniques that focus on accuracy:

As a type of reconstruction activity, Thornbury (1997) describes dictogloss as both top-down and bottom-up processing. Model answers for IELTS Writing task 1 and 2, or parts thereof, offer suitable texts for this, with the text analysis as follow-up. After setting the scene, the teacher reads out the text at normal speed, while learners note down key words. This can be repeated depending on the difficulty of the text.

Learners then collaboratively expand their notes into a text similar to the one they have listened to, adding grammatical forms to content words. Lastly, the learners‟ versions are compared to the original model, and possible varieties are discussed. Wajnryb (1997) gives five reasons for her successes using the „dictogloss‟ procedure in her own classrooms: it provides opportunity for practising the language and to

evaluate performance; it is motivating; it offers experiential learning and is text based, challenging, and stimulating; it is communicative; and, learners move away from the sentence-as-unit idea towards a use of whole chunks of language, which is highly beneficial to the learner's language awareness.

For feedback on writing, rather than using e.g. a correction code to indicate learners‟ errors, the teacher can reformulate the text, retaining the original intention and meaning while making improvements to grammar, lexis, style etc. The learner compares the teacher‟s reformulated version to his or her own version, and the noticed differences are then recorded, memorized and produced in subsequent writing. As this can be a technique which places unrealistic demands on the time of a teacher of large classes, a sample text can be selected or constructed for reformulation, incorporating a representative cover of the learners‟ ideas and language.

As a way of developing an understanding of the structure of the language, syntactic analysis is done both of models and of the learners‟ own production. Through identification of basic sentence components, such as the subject, verb and modifiers, learners are able to identify the cause of many errors in own production and make corrections. When this is followed by a process of self-evaluation and listing types of mistakes made with accurate examples for memorization, greater accuracy can be achieved.

## Techniques that focus on fluency:

In timed free-writing, learners write as much as they can on a given topic for 5 minutes, using key words, phrases or whole sentences without much attention to form. When time is up, groups compare and discuss content. When this is done as a regular

event, learners are able to focus on content and flow, and the timing introduces an element of challenge.

While traditionally, the teaching of writing in CHC classrooms has been product- oriented with an emphasis on accuracy, organization and style, the writing process approach to developing students writing skills is generally considered more effective. In order to develop fluency, the process needs to have an initial focus on content and meaning rather than on form. Pre-writing activities such as group brainstorming, clustering, generating questions about a topic, and meaning-focused input in topic area, stimulate learners to think and encourage them to write. The initial drafting stage and feedback focuses on ideas, meaning and the communicative quality of the content, while accuracy is addressed in the revision and editing stages through noticing exercises, syntactic analysis and memorization.

As in other skills, fluency can only be achieved through extensive writing, (e.g. through email communication with peers or key-pals, journal writing and portfolio work). This suitably takes place within areas of learners‟ own interests, with content as the focal point and minimal attention given to accuracy.

# CONCLUSION

Our analysis of IELTS preparation and the CHC learner began with the assumption that something was consistently not quite right in the preparation that learners in China were getting for the IELTS test. What followed from this was an exploration, based on our experience and reading, of ideal scenarios for an IELTS course for CHC

teachers and learners. The outcome of our work has been a fresh understanding not only of IELTS preparation for CHC learners but of language teaching and learning in general.

As much as possible we have endeavoured to see the strengths of any techniques we have encountered, but have also tried hard to vet any that have had insufficient foundation. To a great degree we think we have found the best, but perhaps the most enlightening thing we have found is how much different approaches to learning can gain from one another.

What we have outlined in this paper is a fusion which, we believe, has made the communicative approach more analytical and memory focussed, and model based analysis more skills integrated and communicatively effective. We conclude that this will be of considerable benefit to learners in the IELTS class and beyond.

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