

The impact of teacher cognition and classroom practices on IELTS test preparation courses in the Australian ELICOS sector

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a study of teachers of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia. The study investigated what teachers know and believe about IELTS, and how these beliefs and knowledge affect how they teach IELTS Test preparation classes.

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and thinking that Australian ELICOS teachers have about IELTS and their teaching practices in IELTS Test preparation courses.

In a first phase, teachers completed an online questionnaire, and were invited to participate in a follow-up interview and classroom observation. It was found that teachers have a sound knowledge base of the format of the test and what is required of the students. However, there was clearly a lack of understanding of the principles behind standardised language testing, which was a partial cause of negative attitudes towards and mistaken beliefs about the usefulness of the IELTS Test. Teachers expressed a range of positive and negative attitudes toward the test based on their beliefs about its fit-for-purpose and its applicability across its various domains of use.

Interviews elaborated upon responses given to the questionnaire. Teachers were also asked about their beliefs about language, language learning and what they considered to be best practices for language teaching in general, and IELTS Test preparation teaching in particular.

Together with classroom observations, the data from this second phase were analysed using a theoretical approach to teacher knowledge that goes beyond what teachers declare they know about IELTS and about language teaching, considering how they go about re-contextualising and creating a form of knowledge they consider appropriate for the classroom.

It was found that teachers differ widely in these practices, and indeed, in their methodology for teaching the IELTS course. There was clearly anything but a standardised approach to IELTS preparation in ELICOS, which is cause for concern in terms of the impact the test has on English language courses, as well as the impact teacher cognition has on preparing students for taking the test. It is this opportunity the study highlights as a significant outcome of the research.

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IELTS Research Program

The IELTS partners – British Council, Cambridge English Language Assessment and IDP: IELTS Australia – have a longstanding commitment to remain at the forefront of developments in English language testing. The steady evolution of IELTS is in parallel with advances in applied linguistics, language pedagogy, language assessment and technology. This ensures the ongoing validity, reliability, positive impact and practicality of the test. Adherence to these four qualities is supported by two streams of research: internal and external.

Internal research activities are managed by Cambridge English Language Assessment's Research and Validation unit. The Research and Validation unit brings together specialists in testing and assessment, statistical analysis and item-banking, applied linguistics, corpus linguistics, and language learning/pedagogy, and provides rigorous quality assurance for the IELTS test at every stage of development.

External research is conducted by independent researchers via the joint research program, funded by IDP: IELTS Australia and British Council, and supported by Cambridge English Language Assessment.

Call for research proposals: The annual call for research proposals is widely publicised in March, with applications due by 30 June each year. A Joint Research Committee, comprising representatives of the IELTS partners, agrees on research priorities and oversees the allocations of research grants for external research.

Reports are peer reviewed: IELTS Research Reports submitted by external researchers are peer reviewed prior to publication.

All IELTS Research Reports available online: This extensive body of research is available for download from www.ielts.org/researchers

INTRODUCTION FROM IELTS

This study by Philip Chappell, Agnes Bodis and Heather Jackson of Macquarie University was conducted with support from the IELTS partners (British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, and Cambridge English Language Assessment) as part of the IELTS joint-funded research program. Research funded by the British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia under this program complement those conducted or commissioned by Cambridge English Language Assessment, and together inform the ongoing validation and improvement of IELTS.

A significant body of research has been produced since the joint-funded research program started in 1995 – over 100 empirical studies have received grant funding. After undergoing a process of peer review and revision, many of the studies have been published in academic journals, in several IELTS-focused volumes in the *Studies in Language Testing* series (<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/silt>), and in *IELTS Research Reports*. Since 2012, in order to facilitate timely access, individual research reports have been made available on the IELTS website immediately after completing the peer review and revision process.

Chappell and his colleagues investigate Australian ELICOS teachers' knowledge, beliefs about and attitudes towards IELTS and the effects these have on their teaching. They found that, on the whole, teachers had good knowledge about the content of the IELTS test. However, as has also been observed with stakeholders in schools (Murray, Cross and Cruickshank, 2014) and in higher education (O'Loughlin, 2012), some teachers held beliefs and attitudes about IELTS that result from having inadequate assessment literacy. Thus, they write that "there is an opportunity to communicate the principles behind the design of the test and how these relate to its variety of applications".

For example, the researchers indicate that some teachers wonder about the appropriateness of IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training having common Listening and Speaking sections. There are, in fact, good reasons for this to be found in the literature. For one, corpus research (e.g. Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd & Helt, 2002) shows that unlike the literate modalities, where there are pronounced differences across academic and non-academic contexts, the oral modes are actually more alike than different – lecturers do not talk like textbooks; they talk like you and me.

Similarly, many of the other issues raised about the test have their origin in the nature of testing, where a variety of factors need to be considered – validity, reliability, impact and practicality (Saville, 2003) – and balanced against each other. Thus, for instance, it should not be a surprise that the ability to write a 50,000-word thesis is not usually tested by asking a candidate to write a 50,000-word thesis. Testing always involves sampling and making inferences based on samples.

The IELTS partners are aware of our responsibility to help inform test users about the test: why the test is the way it is; how it might be used appropriately; and what the outcomes mean. To that end, a range of materials aimed at different audiences have been produced, including booklets such as *Ensuring Quality and Fairness in Language Testing* and DVDs such as *IELTS Scores Guide*. Information sessions for stakeholders are also held regularly in various parts of the world. Still, more needs to be done, and insight gained from research such as this will inform the IELTS partners' future efforts.

Part of what makes this so challenging and so fascinating all at once is how diverse IELTS stakeholders are. In this study, there were almost as many different orientations to teaching IELTS preparation courses as there were participants. As the researchers rightly point out, this begs the question of "the impact of each approach on students' test performance", and is probably one line for future research to pursue. In the same way that test providers have an obligation to demonstrate the validity of their tests, there is also an obligation for course providers to demonstrate the efficacy of their courses. The interests of language learning are best served when we all – language learners, language teachers and language testers – collectively fulfil our responsibilities.

Dr Gad S Lim
Principal Research and Validation Manager
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1 INTRODUCTION

Of the 1.5 million people who travel to an English-speaking country to learn English each year, 13% (almost 200,000 English language students) choose Australia. Of these English language learners, 42% are expected to use their English study as a pathway to other educational pursuits, such as vocational or higher education. The mechanisms for this pathway most often require students to have a current English language proficiency test score from a high-stakes standardised test such as IELTS. Thus, the approximately 85,000 overseas students taking an English language intensive course in Australia have a direct interest in gatekeeping tests that evaluate their English language proficiency.

A significant number will take preparation courses offered by one of the 250 ELICOS (English language intensive courses for overseas students) colleges (English Australia, 2015). However, there are no specific qualifications needed to teach these courses other than the standard requirement, set by the national English language teaching quality assurance body, of a three-year degree and a recognised TESOL qualification (NEAS, 2015). Additionally, many of the course providers for these teaching qualifications do not include any explicit content or training in teaching test preparation courses such as IELTS. Not surprisingly, there is a perceived need for more professional learning opportunities for teachers engaged with, or interested in, teaching test preparation courses, such as those preparing students to take the IELTS test (Badger and Yan, 2012).

The English language-teaching sector in colleges in Australia (both university-based and stand-alone providers) employs teachers from a variety of social, cultural, linguistics and educational backgrounds, with a wide range of teaching experiences, and varying levels of knowledge of, and experience with, standardised tests such as IELTS. As noted, entry-level teacher preparation programs do not prepare teachers for these courses and there are few formal or ongoing programs in which teachers can be trained in how best to teach them. Thus, the knowledge that teachers use to inform their teaching is gained largely from their workplace contexts and is shaped by their own histories as both learners and teachers. Despite the importance of IELTS in English language teaching in Australia, there have been no studies that directly focus on the nature of these beliefs, knowledge and understandings of the testing system, how these cognitive factors have been shaped, and what impact they have on language teachers' approaches to test preparation courses. There is, thus, a need to understand teachers' thought processes and knowledge about IELTS and how they apply their knowing and thinking to classroom learning and teaching in test preparation courses. This report presents findings of a study that addresses this need.

2 BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The relationship between language tests and language teaching

Research studies investigating the impact of high-stakes standardised tests on language teaching and learning have portrayed the relation between the test and teaching as complex (Alderson and Wall, 1993). Test washback, or the influence of testing on teaching and learning (Cheng and Curtis, 2004), does not represent a linear, or direct relation. Like most issues involving teachers and students negotiating language classroom curricula, there is a complex set of contextual factors at play. Indeed, Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) revealed that among teachers who taught both test preparation and general English classes, teachers approached each course with different methodological aims and learning outcomes. However, there were such significant differences between the teachers themselves that it was impossible to attribute any cause-effect relationship between the test and the test preparation class.

There are myriad influences on the way a teacher teaches a particular course with a particular group of students, revealed in the various models of teacher planning. Teachers differ in the way they plan their courses and lessons. Some plan at a more macro level based on course goals and outcomes; others plan on a more micro, day-to-day level (Richards and Lockhart, 1994). There are also spur-of-the-moment decisions made based on teachers' beliefs about how best to respond to students as classroom activity unfolds (Hammond and Gibbons, 2005). Therefore, researchers need to pay attention to teachers' decision-making processes related to their methodology, as well as more spontaneous planning decisions and on-the-fly classroom decisions. This is particularly important when teachers are not constrained institutionally to teach in a particular way (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996). Teachers' decisions are not only influenced by their ability to reflect and project outcomes, and their preferred way of planning, but also on their 'practical pedagogical wisdom', seen by Shulman (1987, p 11) as consisting of maxims that form part of a teacher's knowledge base that guides her or his classroom practices. For language teachers, this is represented as their personal theories of the nature of language, how language is learned, and how it should be taught.

This underscores the importance of taking the cognitive dimension of language teaching into account when investigating how test preparation courses are taught, a point also made by Watanabe (1996). The cognitive dimension includes beliefs about and attitudes towards the test and methods of preparing students to take the test (Wall, 2013), knowledge teachers have about the make-up of the test (Wall and Horack, 2006) and the test's *raison d'être* (Wall, 1996). Spratt (2005) concurs with this list, adding the teachers' own education and training, the resources they have to hand, and the school conditions where teaching and test preparation occurs.

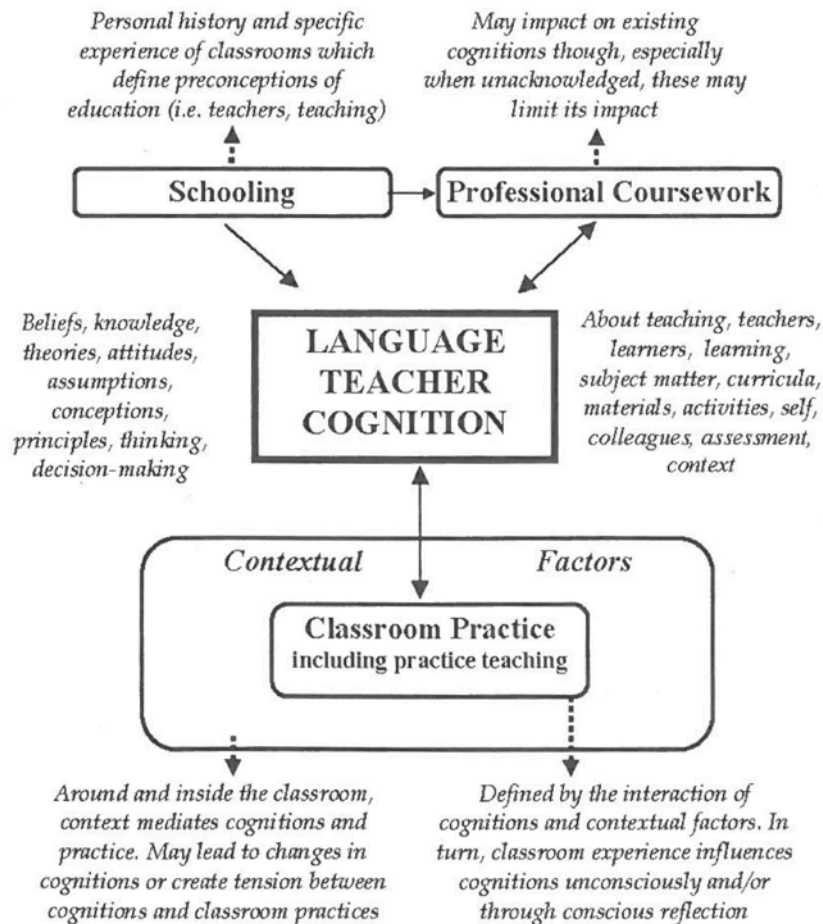


Figure 1: Elements and Processes in Language Teacher Cognition (Borg, 2006, p. 283)

The complex relationship between all these factors has been captured by Borg (2006) in his model of the elements and processes of language teacher cognition (see

Figure 1). The actual elements of cognition: beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, conceptions, principles, thinking, and decision-making together comprise a list of constructs that in a practical sense overlap, and may be quite difficult to distinguish between when considering data, such as those gained from interviews with teachers. Indeed, Borg recognises this and suggests that selecting possibly even one construct from this list will be adequate for most purposes. The current teacher cognition research literature indicates this suggestion has been taken up by many researchers.

While there is very little indication in the literature of research conducted into teacher cognition involving test preparation courses, Wall notes the desirability of such studies:

[W]ashback is not easy to predict or control, and ... the shape it assumes is influenced not only by tests but by the interaction of numerous factors, *including characteristics of the teachers and students involved, characteristics of the educational context and characteristics of the wider social, political and cultural setting.* (Wall, 2013, p 83, emphasis added)

The study reported here is focused on investigating aspects of teacher cognition related to standardised tests and the test preparation courses that are a significant result of the impact of standardised language testing on English language teaching in Australia. Specifically, the study investigates the relations between teacher cognition and IELTS test preparation courses in ELICOS in Australia.

2.2 Teacher cognition in standardised language testing

A promising area of research into understanding the complexities of the impact of standardised tests on language teaching and learning programs, therefore, is investigating the nature of teachers' knowledge of, beliefs about and attitudes toward standardised tests and test preparation courses, together with principles associated with the nature of language and how it is best learned in second language instructional settings. This is a relatively new area of interest for those concerned with research into language teaching and learning, emanating from mainstream education studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, for example, Grossman (1990) and Shulman (2004). These studies were concerned with teacher knowledge and beliefs, which Borg's work over the past decade has expanded upon in the second language teaching field, collectively known as language teacher cognition research (e.g. Borg 2003, 2006, 2012).

Research into language teacher cognition has provided the field of language teaching with a way to conceive of the relationship between what language teachers think, know and believe (their cognitions) and their classroom practice. This moves beyond simplistic behavioural notions of teacher education and training, and recognises that despite best efforts to influence teacher behaviour, teachers have their individual ideas, beliefs, knowledge and preferences, all of which have a significant influence on their professional actions.

Borg (2006) provides a comprehensive overview of this research, firstly through presenting a critical review of research concerned with pre- and in-service teachers, and secondly with the two major curriculum areas of language teacher cognition research – grammar and literacy instruction. What is evident from the myriad findings and implications of these studies is the divergence between what we know about theoretical principles and methodological approaches on the one hand, and what is known about teachers' thinking and practices in these curriculum areas on the other.

Significantly, it is clear that simply asking teachers about their classroom practice, based upon their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes, will not provide a reliable indication of what may occur in their classrooms on any particular day, given specific contextual conditions. It is necessary to go beyond self-reporting to consider evidence from a range of data collection instruments, including self-reporting, oral interviews, classroom observation, and more (Borg, 2006; Barnard and Burns, 2012).

Key studies indicate that an individual teacher's cognition has a significant influence on the way s/he perceives a test, and how that perception influences pedagogic decision-making.

These studies indicate the following areas as significant:

- educational background, and experiences, as well as beliefs related to teaching methods (Sturtevant, 1996; Watanabe, 1996; Lam, 1994)
- attitudes toward the actual test and test preparation courses (Alderson and Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Watanabe, 2000; Read and Hayes, 2003)
- understanding of the rationale behind the test (Cheng, 1997)
- beliefs about teaching and learning (Burrows, 2004)
- conceptions of the ideal, successful IELTS student (Moore, Stroupe and Mahony, 2012)
- teachers' perceptions of their contextual conditions – student population and conditions of instruction (White, Sturtevant and Dunlap, 2002)
- teachers' willingness to change their instructional routines in the face of innovation (Cheng, 2005).

In essence, the range of factors identified in the research literature, captured in Borg's (2006) construct of teacher cognition, is associated with a teacher's personal and professional educational history, contextual factors associated with the classroom and the school, and beliefs, knowledge, assumptions and attitudes related to the content area to be taught. These are crucial to investigate systemically in order to gain a more complete understanding of the relation between teachers' knowledge of IELTS and their classroom practice. How language teacher cognition mediates between IELTS and classroom practice is an under-explored area and represents a gap in the literature that this study addresses.

2.3 Teacher knowledge

Within Borg's model of the elements and processes in language teacher cognition, knowledge is positioned alongside other cognitive constructs such as beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and conceptions. It is common for the knowledge of teachers to be thought of primarily as their knowledge of the content of what they are teaching. However, the expertise of teachers goes well beyond simply knowing their subject matter. Research has shown that all teachers, regardless of their expertise, have developed their own personal knowledge base related to how they believe they can best design lessons for particular groups of students that support their learning. Indeed, Shulman (1987) proposes that teachers' knowledge of the content of what they are teaching has been unnecessarily separated from their knowledge of pedagogic practices. In this study, we are concerned with both knowledge bases: teachers' content knowledge and their pedagogical content knowledge.

IELTS can be thought of as a knowledge base whose original and primary purpose is to be used as a standardised test of English for speakers of other languages. The subsequent educational activity of teaching test-takers about the test in order to maximise their test scores is not one of the test's original purposes. As a consequence, the teaching about IELTS occurs in classroom contexts that are removed from its real world context of use. Thus, a 'didactic transposition of knowledge' (Tiberghien and Malkhoun, 2009) is required, involving the conversion of knowledge regarded as a tool for practical use, to knowledge as something to be taught and learnt. This process of conversion into techniques, methods and materials to be used in the teaching and learning process is well documented (Everett and Colman, 1999; Hawkey, 2006; Moore et. al., 2012); however, it is often in the hands of individual teachers.

Consequently, individual differences among language teachers may well result in different configurations of IELTS knowledge to be taught in preparation classes, with a varied range of teaching strategies and orientations applied. Represented in Bernstein's (2000) theory of pedagogic discourse as the re-contextualisation of knowledge for the purposes of pedagogy, this theoretical perspective provides researchers a set of principles with which to understand the transformation of knowledge from its original site (content knowledge) to a pedagogic site (pedagogical content knowledge). Bernstein reasons that the re-contextualisation of knowledge is influenced by an ideological gap that is opened up during the transformation process – a space where ideology plays a part. This space is the site where teacher cognition (that is, beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, assumptions, conceptions, principles, thinking, and decision-making) helps shape the pedagogical content knowledge, including the principles for the teaching and learning of that knowledge. For the proposed study, this ideological space can reveal hitherto implicit influences of the knowledge domain of IELTS on the instructional context, specifically, the decisions teachers make about what and how to teach. Investigating this space is a major aim of this study.

2.3.1 Teachers' content knowledge

For the purposes of this study, the base for teachers' content knowledge is knowledge about the role of the test and its purposes, and attitudes toward IELTS. It also includes an understanding of why the test is designed the way it is, following Shulman's (1986, p 9) suggestion that '[t]he teacher need not only understand that something is so, the teacher must further understand why it is so'.

Content knowledge of IELTS also covers the overall format of the IELTS test, including the two different modules, the different sections, the kinds of questions that are asked and their expected answers, constraints such as word limits and timing, what the individual band scores represent in terms of English language proficiency, and the target language use domains, which require a fairly limited set of language use tasks that link the language being tested to its communicative use in the real world (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). It is noteworthy that teachers of other courses, for example General English, will have a potentially much broader content knowledge base, given the greater variety of communicative language situations in which their students are likely to need to function. Also included in teachers' content knowledge is their knowledge about language, including (but not limited to) knowledge of the text types students are expected to be familiar with, the lexicogrammatical features and patterns of such texts, and skills and strategies for producing and comprehending these texts. See Figure 2 on the next page.

2.3.2 Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge is more than general knowledge about classroom pedagogy generic to classroom teaching, such as knowledge of classroom management (Shulman, 1987). It represents the knowledge that teachers draw upon in order to re-contextualise real world content into a form that reflects their own principles of what constitutes accessible materials for the students, and how best the content is learned and taught. Kleickmann et al (2013, p. 91) identify two core components of pedagogical content knowledge: 'knowledge of students' subject-specific conceptions and misconceptions, as well as knowledge of subject-specific teaching strategies and representations'.

For IELTS preparation courses, this renders into knowledge of how best to engage students with knowledge about the test, and the relative ease or difficulty that students have with particular aspects of that knowledge. It also represents the knowledge of how best to re-contextualise and represent aspects of the test in classroom lessons, and how best to approach the teaching of test-taking knowledge and skills in these preparation courses. Note that this requires subjective judgment on the part of the teacher in the ideological gap theorised by Bernstein (2000).

In short, when teachers utilise pedagogical content knowledge, they are accessing a complex network of knowledge bases that have a direct impact on the content, materials and methodology for teaching IELTS test preparation courses. The relationship between these forms of knowledge is represented in Figure 2, adapted for the purposes of this study into IELTS test preparation teaching from Grossman (1990).

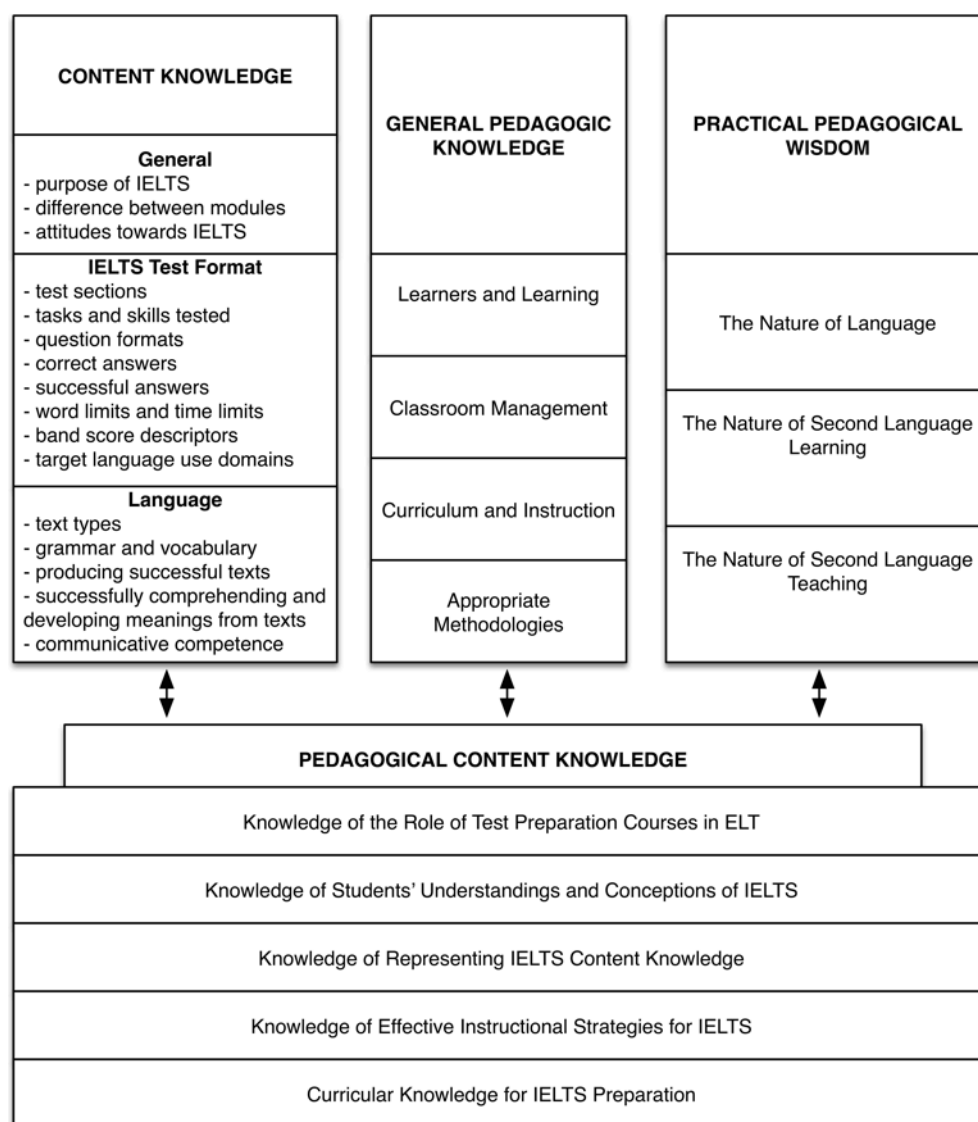


Figure 2: A model of teacher knowledge for IELTS test preparation

2.3.3 Teachers' practical pedagogical wisdom

Practical pedagogical wisdom (Shulman, 1987) refers to principles that guide a teacher's classroom practice. For language teachers, of significance is how a teacher conceives of the nature of language, language learning and language teaching. A language teacher's practical pedagogical wisdom represents her or his orientation toward classroom practice, and can be thought of as a personal philosophy of language learning and teaching (Richards, 1996). This personal philosophy, together with the forms of knowledge discussed above, forms the basis for her or his planning decisions, as well as the moment-to-moment decision making of the classroom. It may constitute well-defined and accepted theories or maxims, or it might consist of more individually distinctive practical beliefs. As demonstrated in a later section of this report, it will vary by teacher and can be quite idiosyncratic, yet has a powerful influence on classroom practice.

There is sufficient evidence from the English language teaching research literature to support the contention that what teachers do in the classroom is largely determined by their practical pedagogical wisdom, as well as their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (Andrews, 2007; Borg, 2003; Breen et al, 2001; Freeman and Johnson, 1998; Gattbonton, 1999; Richards and Lockhart, 1994). For example, Breen et al (2001) found connections between teachers' beliefs about the importance of cognitively engaging language learners and their classroom practice. Gattbonton (1999) found connections between teachers' beliefs in the functional and social nature of language and how they approached teaching knowledge about language. However, it cannot be taken for granted that what a teacher self reports in an interview or a questionnaire will accord with what she or he actually does in the classroom. Farrell and Lim (2005) discuss the influence of contextual factors such as time and a teacher's proclivity for traditional forms of

instruction (informed by their general pedagogic knowledge), both causes for divergences between beliefs and practice. Basturkmen (2012) concludes that more experienced teachers are likely to display a greater correspondence between their beliefs and practice, while there are likely to be greater divergences for less experienced teachers.

In order to account for convergences, as well as divergences of teacher cognition and their classroom practice, it is important, therefore, to allow for more than one method of data collection and analysis in order to tease out and interrogate differences such as these (Borg, 2006).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research questions

3.1.1 Main research questions

What is the relationship between teacher's beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and knowledge of the IELTS test and their test preparation classroom practices?

3.1.2 Guiding research questions

1. *What overall beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and knowledge about the IELTS test do language teachers reveal?*
2. *What do teachers believe to be the overall purpose of the IELTS test?*
3. *What do teachers believe to be the rationale and the philosophy behind the IELTS test?*
4. *What are teachers' overall attitudes toward the IELTS test?*
5. *What specific knowledge do teachers have about the structure and content of the IELTS test?*
6. *What do teachers believe to be their primary roles in test preparation courses?*
7. *What do teachers believe to be the primary roles for students in test preparation courses?*
8. *What aspects of the IELTS test do teachers emphasise when teaching IELTS test preparation courses?*
9. *What do teachers assume about the nature of language and the nature of language learning?*

3.1.3 Research design and method

A sequentially designed mixed-methods approach (Riazi and Candlin, 2014) to the study was adopted in which collection and analysis of data were predominantly qualitative in nature, supported with quantitative data. This acknowledges the complexities of researching teacher cognition and has allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of teacher thinking about IELTS and its relationship to teachers' classroom practices.

An online questionnaire was used in the first phase of the study. The majority of questionnaire questions (see Appendix 1) were harvested from a previous study (Moore, Stroupe and Mahoney, 2012), which had been validated by Hawkey (2006). A trial of the questionnaire returned no significant problems.

The questionnaire results, including quantitative data from all respondents, informed the structured interview questions of the second phase of the study, where individual teachers were interviewed prior to having a lesson observed. There was a standard list of open-ended questions that were asked in the same order in each interview, thus the strategy could be described as directed, open-ended interviewing. Overall, the emphasis was on the qualitative analysis of the interviews together with interpretations of classroom practice, with recourse to what respondents reported in the initial questionnaire.

As discussed above, it is well documented in the literature that teachers' declared knowledge may not correspond to their classroom practices; therefore, this research ensures multiple data sources that will elucidate where teachers' self reported as well as verbal commentaries of their knowledge and beliefs converge or diverge from their classroom practice. Thus, the study can be characterised as MMR (quan->QUAL), where MMR refers to mixed-methods research, -> refers to the sequence of data collection and analysis, upper case QUAL indicates prime emphasis on qualitative data and lower case quan indicates a secondary level of emphasis (Wheeldon, 2010).

3.2 Participants

The questionnaire was delivered online using QUALTRICS software and was open to all individual teachers who had taught IELTS preparation courses prior to the study, or were teaching at the time of the study. Information brochures and posters were surface-mailed and emailed to all ELICOS colleges based in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia listed in the open access *English Australia Journal*. Social media were also used to promote the study and encourage teachers to complete the questionnaire. The English Australia Secretariat included information and a link to the website (see below) in its regular information mail-outs to member colleges. A follow-up mail out was sent a month after the initial mail-out. An information video was available on a dedicated website for the study and provided the means to download all promotional material (see <http://ieltsresearch.weebly.com>).

Despite this comprehensive promotional strategy, the number of responses came in at 40 completed questionnaires, which was far fewer than expected. In light of the difficulty in recruiting respondents, the aims of the study were reviewed to focus more on the relationship between teacher cognition and classroom practice. An initial aim of establishing the knowledge

base and range of attitudes toward IELTS among ELICOS teachers across Australia through gaining a representative sample of respondents that would enable a generalisation across the population was withdrawn. However, the questionnaire responses were essential for investigating the 10 teachers who were also interviewed. They also provided the research team with terminology and several categories of attitudes that were subsequently included in the interview protocols.

Of the 40 respondents, 10 were selected through opportunistic sampling (Jupp, 2006), a form of convenience sampling in which participants from the current community of respondents who are willing to be involved in a subsequent stage of the study are chosen. This also allowed for questionnaire responses to be integrated into the interview questions.

Final participants were spread across all five, mainland States in both private ELICOS colleges and university language centres. These 10 participants agreed to participate in a 30-minute interview followed by a one to two-hour observation of their IELTS preparation class. This class was held either immediately following the interview, or the next day.

While a more representative sample from both university and private language colleges, and all States and Territories would have been preferable, despite comprehensive attempts at achieving such a sample, this was not achieved. This is possibly a reflection of the already busy life of ELICOS teachers, many of whom have casual workplace arrangements, often working at more than one job and facing lower levels of job security than others in more permanent positions, and also the lack of systematic external research conducted in the sector. While there is growing acceptance of teachers' action research, the lack of interest and response from college managers suggests an opportunity to promote the benefits of externally managed and funded research into ELICOS.

The outcome of this sampling strategy is that caution needs to be taken in generalising the findings beyond the individual teachers. However, the benefit of analysing and reporting on the three sources of data on 10 teachers' cognitions and the relationship of these cognitions to classroom practice is that it provides a framework for conceiving of the pedagogical approaches taken to IELTS preparation classes. Further, it provides a rich set of findings on how teachers re-contextualise and transform their knowledge, beliefs about and attitudes towards IELTS into classroom practice, and thus it provides stakeholders with some important opportunities to improve practices in this area. It also provides a benchmark for further studies into the set of factors that make up a unique profile of each teacher.

Full ethics approval was sought from, and granted by, the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee, necessitating the 10 respondents to consent to be involved via signing off an information and consent form. All respondents consented freely and without coercion to participate.

3.3 Data analysis

3.3.1 Questionnaire

Closed questions were analysed automatically using the QUALTRICS software, with raw quantitative data reported in absolute form or as a percentage of the population or sub-population. Answers to open-ended questions were entered into MAXQDA, a qualitative and quantitative software program, coded and quantified. Data coding was accomplished through developing themes and allocating them to nodes, renaming the nodes and splitting or combining them through the process. See Appendix 3 for the code system that was developed.

3.3.2 Interviews and classroom observations

Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription service. Transcripts were checked and corrected by the interviewer. Interviewers then analysed the transcripts for themes related to the guiding research questions, using a pre-formatted spreadsheet. Themes relating to teacher cognition, including teacher knowledge of the test, beliefs about and attitudes towards the test, and principles of the nature of language and how it is learned were used to code and categorise the interviews. While undertaking this interpretive data analysis, researchers were also looking for key themes that stood out by their presence or absence in the classroom observations.

Data from classroom observations consisted of researchers' field notes and audio recordings of the lesson, with a specific focus on the teachers' talk. Parts of lessons were transcribed if deemed relevant; however, in general the observations were used as a secondary source of data to compare teachers' stated knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and principles of IELTS against their approach to teaching the preparation class. This is an essential component of data collection and analysis given the unreliability of teachers' self-reports via questionnaire and interview alone (Borg, 2006).

4 FINDINGS

The greater part of this section provides a comprehensive profile of each of the 10 participants who agreed to participate in the interview and classroom observation. Before presenting these profiles, however, it is instructive to consider an overall analysis of these participants' collective knowledge, beliefs and understandings about IELTS. First, these collective cognitions are presented with respect to the purpose of IELTS, and second, attitudes toward the test in general.

It is interesting to find significant differences within even a small group of 10 teachers working in a reasonably homogeneous language teaching context. These differences are then elaborated upon in the individual participant profiles, which tease apart the aspects of teacher cognition that relate to classroom practice. Herein, P refers to Participant and the number 1 through 10 is an identifier. Gendered personal pronouns have been used faithfully, although all other identifying data have been removed or amended.

4.1 Overall beliefs about the purpose of IELTS

Understandings varied among the 10 participants about the overall purpose of IELTS. The general belief was that its main purpose is to test candidates' language proficiency for the purposes of gaining entry to post-secondary education (TAFE and university). For example, P9 stated 'they're trying to test competence in the university setting', and P8 declared 'it's a benchmark to enter university for the academic training'. This latter statement exemplifies the general awareness that the test has more than one main function, based on the existence of the two modules. However, there were mixed understandings about the purpose of each module, accompanied by a range of beliefs and attitudes attached to these differences in perceived function. This is explored below and discussed further in the individual teacher profiles in following sections to shed light on how it is linked to other factors in each case.

P7 articulated what several participants believed: that the test has gone beyond its original purpose.

Well I know that originally, it was designed obviously as an entrance test to see if students would be able to cope, survive, do well in English-speaking universities. I know that since then it has been sort of co-opted to be used as immigration, that's the general training obviously. (P7)

It should be a test for university entrance, I mean that's what it's been designed as. And of course, we use it for general training for migration. (P9)

Several teachers mentioned the purpose as 'gatekeeping', for example P9 saw this as the main role: 'Gate keeping...I think that's its main function...I think that both TOEFL and IELTS probably do a good job at gate keeping.'

While this is a reflection of the belief that the test is aimed at assessing overall language proficiency for particular domains of language use, the term itself has underlying connotations of a negative nature associated with hegemony and power. By their very nature, standardised, international language tests sort test-takers into categories that provide third parties with a means of allocating scarce resources, such as places in higher education institutions, or accreditation in professional practice. Decisions to preclude test-takers can be linked to a variety of social and political agendas, potentially affecting their future achievements (McNamara and Roever, 2006). It is most likely these agendas that may be the source of negative attitudes toward the gatekeeping role of IELTS.

The general purpose of measuring language proficiency and providing information to a third party was summed up by P4.

The purpose that I think it's used for is just as a measurement of someone's English proficiency. And on that basis, to say that, yes, they've got suitable English to do a particular role, yeah, I think it's probably being used out of context, but I think that's the purpose. (P4)

Some felt there was an underlying financial purpose, or incentive, for the owners of IELTS, especially since the requirement for re-taking the test has been eased, which is seen by P3 as replacing genuine care for test-takers with financial gain.

I think probably six, seven years ago it had a really good purpose...and I recall that there was a three-month period before you could do your next exam. So I really felt they were actually caring about our candidates' English and their progress and things like that and I think that was a really good thing. But now that they can do it every single Saturday I feel like there's a bit of money making involved in that and it's not sending a good message. (P3)

Two participants were ill-informed of the purpose of the test. P8 believed it was originally developed 'for nurses and doctors' and later adapted for immigration purposes due to 'all the people who are coming to Australia and would like to apply for permanent residency'. P8's status as a beginning IELTS test preparation teacher who has not trained as an examiner and has only been teaching IELTS for a few months was affirmed here, and suggestive of the need for greater training and induction into teaching test preparation courses.

Apart from gatekeeping, P1 believed the test has a pedagogic purpose ‘to, in some ways, prepare students for universities’. His justification for this belief was that the test tasks (for the four skills) ‘model elements of academic English’. Indeed, he elaborated upon this by critiquing various elements of test tasks through the prism of evaluating language teaching materials and activities.

So a long turn presentation, a discussion, a tutorial discussion and the writing, it’s somewhat simplistic compared to real academic writing. I mean elements of discussion, argumentation, persuasion, critical analysis. IELTS can challenge people and it can call for a range of functions, I just don’t think it goes far enough in real preparation. (P1)

While P8’s misunderstanding was relatively benign, P1’s beliefs about the overall role of the test as being pedagogic in nature was a fundamental misunderstanding. It is a surprising finding, given that at the time of the study, P8 was a trained IELTS examiner and was undertaking postgraduate study in TESOL.

This underscores the importance of teachers being educated about the role of language tests and the principles and processes of assessing samples of students’ language activity in order to make generalisations about their proficiency for particular domains of activity. However, as discussed in the following section, there is a range of opinions in the research literature about test design for the purpose of predicting future performance in specific contexts.

Overall, then, there was evidence of a lack of uniformity of understandings by ELICOS teachers about the role and purpose of IELTS in Australia and in the ELICOS sector, suggesting an opportunity for stakeholders to address this issue.

In summary, the following is a list of the main themes relating to the purpose of IELTS that emerged from the interviews.

- It is an entrance test for university.
- It is for gatekeeping.
- It is for immigration and study at TAFE and university.
- It is for making money for IELTS.
- It is for measuring people’s English abilities.
- It is for providing standards for study and immigration purposes.
- It is a general test first developed for nurses and doctors.
- It is for preparing people for university.

4.2 General beliefs about and attitudes towards IELTS

Interviews with participants focused not only on what they felt was the purpose of IELTS, but also on their beliefs and attitudes about the quality of the test. The following section reports on participants’ beliefs and attitudes about the qualities of IELTS, organised around positive and negative themes. The concept of test usefulness and its elements (reliability, construct validity, and authenticity) as presented in Bachman and Palmer (1996), have been instructive for the development of the following sections. It should be noted participants were not presented with this concept in the interviews; it has been used *a posteriori* to support the organisation of the analysis.

It is also worth noting that all participants revealed both positive and negative beliefs about and attitudes towards IELTS. A case in point is P9 who, despite saying the test is ‘brilliant’, believed quite strongly that its use for migration purposes was ‘totally unsuitable’, thus acknowledging the validity and reliability of the test for tertiary studies, but questioning it for migration.

Following this general section, each of the 10 teachers is profiled in detail based on her or his cognitions related to IELTS. Attitudinal data are included again to ensure as complete a profile for each teacher as possible.

4.2.1 Positive beliefs and attitudes

Given that IELTS is based on the need for test-takers to complete four separate components, each related to one main macro-skill (Listening Test, Reading Test, Writing Test, Speaking Test), it is not surprising that participants focused on these components as a point of departure for their evaluation. Several participants mentioned positive aspects of the test. For example, P9 felt that it is a good test because it tests the right academic skills for university study, such as the appropriate text types for the Listening and Reading Tests. The Speaking Test is believed by P10 to be fair, which she attributed partly to the knowledge and experience she has gained from being a speaking examiner. P7 believed the individual tests have a sufficient amount of ‘critical thinking skills and academic skills’.

P6 believed quite strongly in the face-to-face interview.

I think the thing I love the most is the one-on-one interviews that students can have because to me that’s so important. You can’t beat that. There’s no computer system that can ever beat that. The face-to-face, one on one responses and so forth. (P6)

P5 cited sociolinguistic criteria for preferring IELTS to other tests from Cambridge English Language Assessment, suggesting IELTS is ‘more realistic’ because it is not based on British models of language, including grammar and speaking. She almost found fault

in IELTS for its 'Eurocentric text and stuff', but concluded that since she had never had a student complain about this, it was not of any considerable concern. She also rationalised this by saying that she, at times, focuses the students on comparing Australian English with British English.

In the classroom we talk about the British sort of colloquial expressions versus the Australian and I try and give them a much broader understanding of language that breaks down the barriers of accents and tell them not to worry about an accent, that that's just part of it. (P5)

More general views of a positive nature related to the test's overall standard. P9, a veteran IELTS examiner and teacher of preparation courses, believed it is a 'brilliant exam', dealing well with its 'half a million candidates...[and]... this whole bank of Cambridge examiners in England doing a brilliant job'. P5 and P10 believed the test overall is fair. P5 stated that test-takers need to have a level of communicative competence in English and cannot succeed simply by learning a pre-conceived 'bunch of expressions'. P10 believed the test to be fair overall in its design and approach: 'I think as a test and as a way of testing English I think it's overall it's pretty fair'. P2 believed it is reliable, and you are able to 'apply to different people from different backgrounds and it will assess them equally'.

P6 stood out for his fervent positive attitude toward all things IELTS. He self-nominated as an IELTS 'fan' who 'loves IELTS' to such an extent that he has been 'corrupted' by it, and has approached all his ELT courses with IELTS methodology and materials since becoming an IELTS preparation teacher.

I give more or less a watered down version if I'm doing an Intermediate General English or Upper Ints [intermediate level students]. I give a watered down version of IELTS by using instant IELTS materials. (P6)

Despite P4's concerns about certain aspects of the test (see below), he moderated his criticisms and suggested that he uses this rationalisation with his students by stating that it is the best test available.

I should underline all that, this is the conclusion I come back to in the class, is I think it's the best that we've got, in terms of large scale testing. (P4)

Two other notable themes of a positive nature emerged from the interviews. P6 viewed the band score descriptors as being useful beyond IELTS teaching and testing based on his belief that they reflect actual, everyday communicative competence, which is partly due to their prescriptive nature.

P3 saw this as a positive feature for employers, as it recognises what people can do.

[It provides] a benchmark towards how well a person can read instructions or how well a person can listen to instructions especially in the workplace. I think that's really important. (P3)

Finally, P7 believed that both teachers and students benefit from test preparation classes and being involved with IELTS because 'you get to find out stuff about the world'. This prompted her to exploit this aspect further by introducing discipline-specific reading texts to her students, for example, articles from *New Scientist* or *The Economist*, which she believed is more motivating for her students. There is more discussion of this point in the Participant 7 profile in a later section of this report.

In summary, the following are the main themes of a positive nature that emerge from the interviews.

- It is a good test – overall fair and reliable.
- It is a good test – tests the right academic skills.
- It has a good standard. It assesses things equally.
- I am impressed with the test.
- The speaking test is fair.
- It is a good test because you learn about the world.
- It is a good test because it includes critical thinking and academic skills.
- I am an IELTS fan – I love IELTS.
- I love the face-to-face interviews.
- I like the prescriptiveness of the band score descriptors.
- It develops students' academic skills.
- It is the best test available.
- It is helpful for employers.
- It is realistic – based on skills.

4.2.2 Negative beliefs and attitudes

While test tasks emerged from the interview data as a positive theme, they also attracted significant criticism. The authenticity of test tasks was a significant concern for participants, and possibly the key driver of negative attitudes toward the test, together with validity concerns. The participants negatively appraised tasks within each of the four components upon which the test is designed.

The term 'authenticity' is used in the technical sense proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996, p. 23): 'the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of the TLU [target language use] task', where the TLU refers to the context

in which the test-taker will use the language away from the test-taking context itself. Authenticity, closely related to construct validity is thus important when considering the generalisability of the band score to the domain of actual language use. There is no universal agreement on the importance of authenticity and face validity (subjective evaluation of how the test appears to be measuring what it is intended to measure) for students and teachers (Lewkowic, 2000).

However, other stakeholders have an interest in whether the test task is representative of activity involving language in the target domain. Indeed, this is clearly of interest to the participants in this study. This was evident in P8's criticism of the Writing Test.

I don't see it as a fair test because I don't think it's got...much validity. For example, even for higher education, I don't think the type of test for example, tasks to writing, is writing about your opinion and it's something that you don't do very often, at university for example and I think other skills might be more beneficial like note taking and not just in the listening but actual...actively note...taking notes and things like this. (P8)

P8's statement about the Writing Test tasks for the Academic Test, based on personal opinion, suggests a belief that the test lacks relevant themes and text types for the TLU domain of university study. Similarly, P4 saw aspects of the Listening Tasks as lacking relevance.

I mean, when are you going to listen to a 15-minute dialogue or 30 minutes or whatever, without seeing somebody's face. (P4)

P1 echoed these beliefs across a range of text types, believing test items on the Writing Test to be 'simplistic compared to real academic writing'. He also believed each of the test components should be more integrated to give them a greater level of authenticity.

So I think some of the task types could be possibly improved. They're very separate, so they're isolated constructs, writing, speaking, listening, reading, whereas university is usually integrated tasks, such as TOEFL. (P1)

P3 had similar concerns about the Speaking Test, believing the tasks lack the complexity required for the TLU domain.

In the Speaking...some of those tasks you can speak for two minutes but it's not really extending, you don't really don't know if that person could speak for five minutes, it's a very small sample of what someone can do and when they meet a native person, for example, can they really speak that long and understand what...and make a coherent discussion or something like that. (P3)

Similarly, P4 used sarcasm to question the validity of the Writing Test for a TLU where students are required to write an extended thesis.

I know a 250-word essay qualifies you to have suitable English to do a 50,000 word thesis...yeah. (P4)

These comments, and other similar ones about task authenticity and validity, are significant both in what they reveal about participants' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes related to the principles of test design vis-à-vis authenticity and construct validity, and for the potential impact these cognitions could have on test-takers while sitting the test. Clearly, this group of participants revealed varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of the principles of language testing and assessment, including the principles behind making inferences about a test-taker's future use of language in a particular TLU task. Further, a test-taker's belief in the relevance of a test task to a particular TLU domain can induce an affective response in the test-taker that can help or hinder their performance on the test (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). However, it is also noted that not all test-takers will view authenticity as personally relevant (Lewkowic, 2000). Consequently, the way teachers communicate about the usefulness, relevance, or validity of a test task in test preparation courses can have a direct impact on test-takers' affective stance during test situations.

Further, the practice of making inferences about a test-taker's future performance is an area that is the subject of ongoing academic debate. For example, McNamara (1996) develops an argument against using tests to infer test-takers' future performance in context-specific tasks, since it usually requires a broad range of non-language knowledge, skills and abilities. Bachman and Palmer (1996) suggest this is unproblematic provided test designers take into account the additional individual characteristics that are included, and that they are explicit about the kinds of inferences that will be made about these non-language characteristics. It would be a worthwhile endeavour to familiarise IELTS teachers with these debates and inform them of the position taken by the test designers in each of the IELTS test tasks.

As with many aspects of the test format, features such as face-to-face interviews were perceived in both a positive and a negative light. The Speaking Test was perceived by some as subjective, and, therefore, lacking reliability. In P2's case, it can also be the source of negative affective factors. It is well documented in the literature that while a certain level and type of anxiety may support test performance, anxiety can also have an adverse impact on language test takers' performance (Spielberger, Anton and Bedell, 2015).

It depends on the examiner, it depends on how they felt that day...Some people find it intimidating as well, if the examiner is not smiling the whole time they feel like they're not doing really well. (P2)

Then also the subjectivity of the marking of the Speaking...we had a...have a, I think he got a six point five or something in his Speaking and I thought oh my goodness, I don't know what...I don't know how he did that. (P4)

Similarly, the Writing Tasks came under criticism for their reliability due to the perceived skills of the assessor, indicating a lack of understanding of the measures taken to achieve reliability in this area.

It depends on whether they [the assessors of the writing test] know the techniques for the essays or not. (P2)

In statements about negative impacts of the test on students' lives, P4 and P9 criticised the construct validity of the Listening Test, particularly the integration of language skills, suggesting that the requirement for correct spelling while writing answers in the Listening Test was not a valid way to interpret scores from the tasks as indications of listening ability. That is, their assumption is that the Listening Test is aiming to test purely listening skills, therefore, it lacks construct validity by testing spelling skills, as spelling, they argue, is not an important aspect of the skill of listening. Again, this is a possible indication of teachers making assumptions about the nature of the IELTS test based on a lack of understanding of testing principles, particularly for integrated tests. It should be noted, however, that as there is ongoing debate about the merits of including spelling and grammar as criteria for testing listening (Harding, Pill and Ryan, 2007; Taylor and Geranpayeh, 2011), these criticisms may be valid.

A couple of things that are pretty frustrating is that a spelling mistake in the Listening Test can make the difference between a seven and a six point five, the person paying another 2,000 or 20,000 dollars for another year or going home or what. (P4)

P9 used an anecdote to question the construct validity, which he referred to as 'marking criteria' of the Listening Test.

They'd get the spelling wrong so they won't get the marks. I mean I've got an example of some guy whose listening was pretty good, but he spelled 'horse' the animal with an A, so of course no marks. So that's the other problem, isn't it, the marking criteria. (P9)

As well as commenting on the test tasks, participants were also critical of other aspects of the test. One application of the test that concerned some of the participants is its use for immigration purposes. There was the feeling that the test is unsuitable for these purposes; however for reasons of practicality, it is still used.

Well I know that originally, it was designed obviously as an entrance test to see if students would be able to cope, survive, do well in English-speaking universities. I know that since then it has been sort of co-opted to be used as immigration, that's the general training obviously. A lot of people, I think, in the industry question that but it's the idea of, that's not what it was designed for perhaps. (P7)

It should be a test for university entrance, I mean that's what it's been designed as...but we use it for general training for migration, which is totally unsuitable. And I think that it's really bad. (P9)

P9 went on to explain his belief that the Listening and Speaking components of the General Training (versus Academic) module should have less rigorous assessments criteria ('they ought to be able to get the bands more easily...looking at different criteria'), however, he believed this situation may be due to practical reasons.

Several participants also perceived the General Training module to be unsuitable for one of its TLU domains – the workplace. While IELTS information literature (IELTS, 2012) positions the Academic module in the 'professional registration' domain, such as the nursing profession (as well as for tertiary study), and the General Training module in the domain of training or studying at below degree level, participants in this study did not indicate a high level of understanding of these domains. P1 believed the General Training test is unsuitable for 'professional training' and should be used 'simply as a means of assessing general language proficiency'. He referred to the tasks of the Writing Test as examples:

I've tutored Irish carpenters, Filipino accountants, and I think the letter...who writes letters nowadays, you know...and the essay, is an essay necessary if it's not an academic task. So the writing, the general writing definitely...but the general writing tasks I think need an overhaul. (P1)

P2 had similar reservations, stating his belief that overall, the General Training module:

doesn't really assess their performance in a working environment. I think there should be other tests for that...they're not going to be listening to long lectures in English and have to answer questions in a multiple choice way, for example. So that would be unfair for me if I was going to do a job where I'm an assistant where I have to pick up the phone every five minutes and all I'm going to hear is numbers and names and things like that. (P2)

Validity and authenticity are contested areas of language testing and it is not the purpose of this report to state a position on these debates. However, in the spirit of reporting on the nature of teachers' knowledge of IELTS and its impact on the test preparation classes they teach, there is clearly a need for more information about these technical aspects of standardised testing and assessment.

Arguably, this can be achieved through postgraduate study of language testing and assessment subjects; however, the typical ELICOS teacher does not undertake this form of study and there needs to be other means for disseminating the information and supporting teachers' understandings of these areas.

P2 also felt that the test format is 'outdated' due to it being paper-based, rather than computer-based, which is time-consuming for assessing and not representative of written language in the TLU domain in general: 'the other thing is in writing, who writes on paper anymore?'

Several participants raised fairness and ethical considerations. P2 stated the belief that it is unfair to apply test results from the General Training module because 'it doesn't really assess their performance in a working environment. I think there should be other tests for that'. Both P2 and P3 believed there should be feedback to the students on their performance in the test, despite both participants' confidence in their own ability to provide this function. This suggests a misunderstanding of the purpose of the test and the principles upon which standardised tests are based.

The fact that the IELTS doesn't give them feedback, I think is very, very unfair because if you go and take the test 13 times and you keep failing in your writing, how do you know what you're doing wrong if there's no feedback? (P2)

P2 expressed her belief in the duty of IELTS to interact with test-takers at a later time on their test performance despite her stated belief that a teacher in a test-preparation context can carry out this function.

So when they come to me and I can see the writing, it's very easy for me to see oh, your problem is the structure, your problem is the grammar, your problem is here. But no-one tells them that. (P2)

P3 had similar feelings.

They just get a score and they sort of wonder why did I get this or why did I get that and there's just not enough feedback. I mean I can see the number and I can say well maybe it's your spelling or maybe it's this... (P3)

Familiarity with both test format and content was raised by some participants as an important factor. P8 suggested there is a level of unfairness due to the impact that knowledge about IELTS and 'test techniques' can have on a test-taker's score. She felt that this knowledge can affect test scores irrespective of a test-taker's language proficiency level.

I know that the main purpose is to assess your level of English, but I think there is a lot of test and test techniques as well that you need to know in order to have a good score. I'm pretty sure that a lot of native speakers would not get a nine just by taking without knowing anything about the test. (P8)

P10 articulated the belief that the choice of content can result in an unfair situation for test-takers who do not have familiarity with that content. She suggested this unfairness is the result of 'cultural and...background' differences, although acknowledged that 'you could be a native speaker but you're still not going to be able to really understand the issues that are being discussed'.

In addition to their beliefs about the fairness of the test, both P8 and P10 reflected the persistence of native-speakerism in English language teaching, a bias against non-native speakers of English for reasons more than their perceived linguistic deficiencies, defined by Holliday (2008, p 48) as 'how the "native speaker" Self finds the "culture" of the "non-native speaker" Other problematic and in need of "correction"'. The assumption behind P8's comment (above) is that a lot of native speakers would receive the highest band scores (Band 9) if they were familiar with a requisite set of test-taking techniques, and for P10, if they were familiar with the content. These assumptions are plainly wrong, given that band score 9 represents an 'expert user' with exceptional literacy levels, a profile that fits only a certain subset of native-speakers of English, as well as speakers of English as a second or subsequent language.

P10 also believed that individual band scores should remain constant for a period of time ('maybe for a year that 8 [band score] should stay') to address her perception of test unfairness because of fluctuating band scores over different test-taking occasions. This point should be considered in light of other participants' criticisms of the frequency with which test-takers can take the test.

In summary, these main themes of a negative nature emerged from the interviews.

- Tasks are not valid or are inauthentic.
- The test is not a good design for immigration.
- Tasks contain Eurocentric texts and language.
- Marking criteria are unfair – finicky (e.g. spelling in the Listening Test).
- No feedback is provided to test-takers.
- Aspects of the test are unethical, e.g. students can take the test every week, which is an indication to some teachers of a fiscal rather than educational focus.
- Interviews in the Speaking Test are intimidating.
- The test has a poor, out-dated format as it is paper-based.
- The assessment of Writing and Speaking Tests can be too subjective.
- It is unfair that learning test techniques and tips can have an impact on final band scores.
- The General Training module is not suitable for professions.
- Tasks are simplistic and irrelevant.

While many of the beliefs and assumptions about IELTS expressed by the participants can be challenged with reference to the professional and academic literature from the field of language testing and assessment, it is not the place of this study to do so. Nor is it within the study's scope to critically argue against the principles and practices of IELTS, and indeed the attitudes and conceptions expressed by the participants of the study. What is important, however, is to stress the variability in teacher cognition (beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, assumptions and conceptions) about IELTS that has revealed itself in the study, and note that this in itself is having a potentially significant impact on the teaching and learning contexts of IELTS test preparation courses.

Designers and administrators of standardised tests strive for consistency across the spectrum of their tests, from question design, procedures for administering the test, methods of scoring, how the scores should be interpreted, restrictions on examiners' involvement with test-takers, and the like. It stands to reason that greater consistency in methods of formal classroom-based test preparation courses would add to the rigor of the standardised test. Critically, test preparation courses run the risk of transgressing ethical standards within the field of English language teaching and testing and therefore deserve ongoing scrutiny.

4.3 Profiles of teacher cognition about IELTS

In this section, profiles are presented of each of the ten teachers who participated in the interviews and classroom observations, and who also initially completed the online questionnaire. The profiles are written using a defined rhetorical structure to allow ease of comparison. This structure is:

- Heading and a statement characterising the nature of the teacher's approach to teaching a test preparation lesson.
- Background data (gender, age, etc.)
- Analysis of the teacher's practical pedagogical wisdom.
 - How the teacher orients his or her self to teaching IELTS.
 - How the teacher views IELTS in comparison to other English language courses.
- Analysis of the teacher's content knowledge for teaching IELTS test preparation.
 - The teacher's belief about the overall purpose of the IELTS Test.
 - The teacher's beliefs about and attitudes towards the IELTS test.
 - Knowledge about the different test formats (Academic and General Training).

- Knowledge about the sections of the test, based on the following true/false statements:
 1. The IELTS test includes a section testing grammar.
 2. In the Speaking module candidates have to both ask and answer questions.
 3. Reading and Writing together carry more than half of the marks
 4. Candidates have two opportunities to hear the voice recordings in the Listening Test.
 5. Candidates have to write at least 150 words for the first task in the Writing Test.
 6. Candidates often need to refer to the reading texts when they do the Writing Test.
 7. The Reading Test has three sections.
 8. In the Listening Test, candidates may have to label a diagram.
- Analysis of the teacher's pedagogical content knowledge for teaching IELTS Test preparation.
 - Strategies for presenting IELTS content.
 - Strategies for engaging students with the content.
 - Strategies for selecting and transforming content in an accessible way for students.

4.3.1 Participant 1: Scaffolded, learner-centred IELTS test preparation

- Male, 31–40 years
- BA, CELTA, Cert 4 TAE, MEd (in progress), certified writing and speaking examiner for IELTS
- Years teaching English: 5
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 2
- Trained as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- No training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses

P1 reported that he used a similar approach to teaching most English courses, including IELTS. This was based on his belief that language can be characterised as an 'agreed upon system of meaning making' (influenced by his background in learning Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory at Masters level), and language learning 'has to be through using it'. For P1, this means focusing first on fluency and then on accuracy, however, he did mention that for IELTS classes, accuracy is important in terms of helping students meet the criteria for successful completion of the test tasks.

Is it better to build from accuracy or build from fluency? I think it's actually better to work backwards from fluency to accuracy. So I'm probably less tolerant of mistakes than I would be in an academic English class. (P1)

P1's belief in learning an L2 through using it was evident in his statements about how he deals with errors through the incorporation of peer feedback, and by encouraging his students to monitor their own language production.

I'm...or I would...be less tolerant I mean I'm...not that I would snap at them but that I will draw their attention or try and, I don't know, through various means, you know, echoing or recasting or whatever I try and get them ideally, rather than me, to correct themselves. If it's a language issue that they actually just don't know about then I have to teach it rather than elicit it. But I try to encourage them to really look at their own language. To, when possible, to give feedback to each other, to...both in...speaking and writing as well. It can be harder with writing but ...and I know they're not...language experts but I think it's...the feedback can be useful. (P1)

P1 reported in the questionnaire that his methodology for teaching second language classes would not differ by course, but the content would. For IELTS preparation classes, decisions about content are based upon what he considers necessary to support his students in succeeding in the test:

The delivery of almost all lesson content is presented in terms of how it will help students in the test. Language work, skills strategies and text types explored are linked to the test.

I would use similar approaches to teaching most courses, be they English for general, business, academic or other special purposes, such as exam preparation. What might differ would be the content, and relative weighting and focus given to particular skills or text types. (P1)

This underscores the importance of having a good content knowledge base for IELTS, since P1 explicitly acknowledged its importance for his pedagogical content knowledge. For P1, the teaching and learning of IELTS involves experiential classroom activity focused on IELTS content. Overall, it is clear from P1's responses that he has a good overall content knowledge of IELTS. However, the stance he took in these responses is also evidence of a somewhat negative overall attitude towards IELTS. This was teased out in the interview, when he stated his belief that the main purpose of IELTS is 'gatekeeping', which is to 'limit intake' of less proficient students to institutions, which he felt was a concern. He demonstrated a good understanding of the difference between the two modules. Indeed, the source of P1's negative attitudes is the General Training Test, which he sees as unsuitable for use with professional workplace contexts (such as Nursing). He sees the test as too general and simplistic for its intended professional and vocational use. Overall, he feels the tasks could be improved to improve its perceived validity, a theme that emerged strongly with other participants and that is discussed in the previous section.

The characterisation of P1's pedagogical content knowledge base as *scaffolded, learner-centred IELTS test preparation* reflects his orientation to teaching IELTS test preparation, which privileges the students as active participants in their learning. His pedagogic orientation also privileges the role of the teacher as someone who guides and supports students, who weakens or strengthens his support and control of the lesson contingent upon the particular aim at that stage of the lesson. While his perceived mission appears clear and unambiguous: 'my brief is to teach a test preparation class, so that's what I do', his belief that IELTS test tasks have a pedagogic role 'to in some ways prepare students for universities' complicates the otherwise straightforward inference that his main role is to prepare students to take the test.

As mentioned above, P1 believes that his approach to language teaching should vary mainly by the type of content that is most relevant for the learners' needs, suggesting that his practical pedagogical wisdom universally applies to his classroom teaching. He elaborated upon this in the interview with reference to teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. With IELTS, he feels that the band score criteria should always be the focus, whereas in other EAP courses, the focus can be more flexible and related to a range of target language uses across university study.

I think IELTS teaching has to be more prescriptive while EAP teaching can be more about giving a range of options. (P1)

For P1, important sources of information about IELTS are the latest published course books. His preferred strategy for presenting the content of IELTS tests to his students is to use texts similar to those used in the test tasks, which he either sources from course books or from authentic sources.

Almost all lesson content is presented in terms of how it will help students in the test. Language work, skills strategies and text types explored are linked to the test. (P1)

Based on the classroom observation of his lesson, there is clear consistency between P1's practical pedagogical wisdom and the activity that occurs in his classroom. The observed lesson was characterised by being student-centred, where students worked collaboratively in small groups on language tasks. During the observed lesson, the content and text types were related to IELTS test tasks, such as a range of teaching and learning activities focused on Writing Task 1. There was a substantial amount of small group work, supporting his belief in learning language through using it, as well as the importance of students assisting each other with their language learning, such as correcting each others' errors. It was a student-centred lesson, where the students were at times given quite a deal of freedom to interact with each other, while at other times were expected to engage with the teacher through teacher-to-class questioning in demonstrations and explanations.

P1 focused the students' attention on and aimed to trigger their engagement with the statistical reports used in this Writing Task 1, explaining differences between commenting on and analysing statistics. He provided specific tips for writing this particular text type, and also provided students with models of successful texts that met the criteria for a high band score for the task.

In transforming the content of IELTS Writing Test Task 1 into a form of knowledge that he believes his students will not have difficulty accessing, P1 has applied the ideological principles of students learning by doing tasks that reflect the actual test-taking situation, using materials similar to those that will be found in the test. In this way, he realises his claim to be an IELTS teacher who focuses on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills for taking the test. His aim is for students in his classes to learn to apply their 'existing language, knowledge and skills' to an IELTS test-taking context:

I would say that now I'm very much teaching for the test because I've got a pretty good understanding of it I think...I teach them...that it's not necessarily about creativity or what is good academic writing necessarily, it's about meeting the criteria and achieving the score you need...it's about learning those test skills, exam skills, so task analysis, planning, editing. It's really all about examination skills and techniques. (P1)

P1 finds this sometimes conflicts with the students' understanding of good, appropriate writing for academic contexts; however, he justifies his approach by reference to the band score criteria. '[When students ask me] why would I write like this...I tell them because that's what they want'.

4.3.2 Participant 2: IELTS test preparation information exchange

- Female, below 30 years
- Bachelor in English Language and Teaching
- Years teaching English: 8
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 4
- No IELTS examiner training
- No training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses

When P2 was asked 'What comes into your mind when you think about language?' the first thing mentioned was 'communication', followed by 'differing systems of grammar' and 'banks of vocabulary'. However, when asked about her beliefs in how a second language is learned, she stated that 'structure' and 'grammar' are paramount for adult learners. P2's justification for this belief rests on a further belief that, although children can acquire a second language naturally, adults require the structure and grammar to make sense of the second language and to compensate for their inability to learn language as children do.

But you definitely need to study, you know, structure as well as grammar because even if you are exposed, it's very difficult, at least for adults, that they will actually learn a language well. Maybe for children, it would be easier if they just, you know, live in another country where they can speak that language, they'll learn it very quickly, but for adults they sort of need to have that structure that they can go to and sort of say, oh, okay, so that's what it is. (P2)

The idea of including communication into the formal learning process did not feature in P2's interview discussions other than as a way for students to practice or apply grammatical structures. Indeed, P2 (whose L1 is Italian) revealed a belief in the effectiveness of grammar translation principles:

When I'm teaching Latin people it's very easy. I just say, okay, this is the structure in Italian, this is the structure in English, and they sort of relate to it very quickly. (P2)

For her non-Latin students, P2 believes in explaining the rules of grammatical structures, which students can then apply. She also stated that the IELTS test preparation class is not for language teaching, but teaching strategies for the test. P2 appears to value declarative knowledge, represented by knowledge about language and knowledge about test taking. This is in contrast to P1, who places greater value on procedural knowledge, or knowledge about how to use language and how to complete the IELTS test tasks.

I know that the main purpose is to assess your level of English, but I think there is a lot of test and test techniques as well that you need to know in order to have a good score. I'm pretty sure that a lot of native speakers would not get a nine just by taking without knowing anything about the test. (P2)

P2 has a sound content knowledge base of the IELTS test. Her stated belief in the purpose of the test reflects her preoccupation with communication: 'to assess the ability of candidates to communicate in the English environment'. Notably, she sees the test as focusing on language ability across the various criteria that are expressed in the band descriptors. She distinguishes between the two formats by acknowledging the broad contexts to which each relates – 'an academic setting such as universities' for the Academic module and 'language focused on people who want to reside in an English-speaking country' for the General Training module. Overall, P2's attitude toward IELTS is mainly negative. Her stated belief that the test is unfair when used for work purposes reflects the dilemma discussed earlier of using the test to predict test-takers' performance in contexts where non-linguistic skills and knowledge are required. P2 articulates this clearly with the claim: 'It doesn't really assess their performance in a working environment...I don't think that's quite fair'.

She also believes the paper-based format of the test is outdated, interviews can be intimidating, and the fact that there is no feedback on test performance is a negative aspect.

Representing P2's pedagogical content knowledge as *IELTS test preparation information exchange* captures her strongly didactic orientation to teaching IELTS test preparation courses. Favouring strategies that facilitate the exchange of information between the teacher and the students, she estimates that over half of her class time is spent on giving information about test content and format, and taking practice tests. She views her approach as strategically different to other IELTS teachers in that she favours instruction and explanation of test-taking techniques for the four skills, especially writing, over a comprehensive coverage of grammar.

Whereas most teachers focus on the grammar, which is not bad, but what I think is...you just don't have the time to try and give them all the grammar they should have learnt so far to get a score in the IELTS...I think that the main focus for them is to know how to do better in the IELTS. (P2)

If the 10 teachers in this study are any indication of the range of approaches to language teaching and teaching test preparation courses, P2 is clearly misrepresenting other language teachers by making this claim. This inaccuracy is possibly influenced by her practical pedagogic wisdom about the nature of language and second language learning, focused on structure and grammar, which she may assume to be commonly held wisdom among her colleagues.

P2 states that she varies her approach to different English language courses based on her interpretation of student needs, again claiming superiority over other teachers, who she says focus on 'what they (teachers) think they need [rather than] what students really need'. Specifically, she sees IELTS as a course primarily to improve her students' test-taking abilities, and thus should be less language focused and involve fewer communicative activities. Indeed, she claims that success in IELTS does not require high proficiency in grammar. Her approach to general English courses is to include a lot more 'grammar and communication oriented format'. She sees this difference in content as significant, but maintains that her instructional strategies, whose goals are to 'facilitate the information' to students, remain constant.

While different in nature to P1, this is another example of the pervasiveness of a teacher's practical pedagogical wisdom, extending across different course types. In P2's case, the descriptor of information transfer is appropriate, as opposed to P1, where learning by doing seemed an appropriate characterisation of his theory of language learning.

P2 believes that the format of the test is continually changing; therefore, to keep abreast of these changes, she acquires the latest course books and test-related materials, and accesses a lot of information on the internet. For her, this is a 'personal investment' 'cause I just want to know what's happening'. As mentioned, P2 privileges content about test-taking strategies and test format.

I try to find material that will help them answer the questions in the test more accurately, therefore classes are test orientated. (P2)

In addition, she relies on band score criteria to determine 'what's being assessed'. This conflation of descriptors specifying various competency levels with what specific test items are measuring is a simplification that provides P2 with a principle for selecting and transforming the content for her lessons.

The first thing I do when I teach writing and speaking...I give them the scoring criteria, and we go through it together. And I explain to them what everything means, because some things are very specific. (P2)

Band score descriptors, together with practice tests and past test papers are the materials of choice for P2, whose overall approach to engaging the students and supporting their learning is based on an information transfer model of communication. In a didactic style, students are provided with the information and invited to ask questions to clarify their understandings.

This analysis is supported by the observation of her classroom practice. Much of the lesson was didactic in nature. It was teacher-centred with the teacher seated behind her desk for most of the lesson, providing the students with knowledge about the IELTS test, and techniques and strategies to use while taking the test. There were also episodes where the teacher explained surface level grammatical knowledge, such as the use of punctuation and capitalisation.

In an interesting divergence of practical pedagogical wisdom from classroom practice, although P2 views language primarily as a means of communication, there was very little communication on the part of the students apart from listening to the teacher, at times answering her questions, and occasionally asking a question.

Indeed, P2 is a good example of where stated beliefs about the nature of language and learning conflict with both classroom practice and more in-depth interview responses.

4.3.3 Participant 3: Co-operative discovery-based learning, General English style

- Female, 31–40 years
- BA in Language Studies, CELTA, Grad. Dip. Ed (TESOL & ICT)
- Years teaching English: 15
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 7
- Trained as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- No training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses

P3's conceptions of language are relatively opaque. She stated the belief that language is organised around 'grammar patterns', and its function is to decode. At the same time, she states her belief that language involves 'communication skills' as well as knowledge about culture. Learning a language is seen to primarily involve students learning from each other. P3 feels quite strongly that this occurs through group work and students collaborating with each other.

For P3, an important part of collaboration is peer evaluation:

I'm very big on formative feedback and getting peers to give them feedback as well as the teacher giving them feedback. (P3)

P3 has a good general content knowledge base of IELTS, however, she does not provide evidence of having a very detailed knowledge of the test's main purpose. She stated in general terms:

'[The purpose is to test] what the candidate can and cannot do with their English skills and how well they can communicate...this ability can improve down the track'. (P3)

This response suggests that P3 does not see IELTS as adequate for providing a longer-term assessment of a candidate's language ability. It is also evidenced by the repetition of the theme that IELTS is a 'temporary measure' throughout this participant's interview.

Her responses also suggest a lack of thorough understanding of the differences between the two modules. She neglects to specifically mention that the General Training module is often used for migration purposes although the mention of 'visa purposes' is likely to be alluding to this. It is also worth noting that P3 equates the Academic module only with university entrance and not with entry to professions or other tertiary-based institutions such as TAFEs or specialist colleges.

These apparent gaps in P3's content knowledge base are surprising given her seven years' experience teaching test preparation classes, and her status as an active IELTS examiner.

P3's attitude toward IELTS is generally negative, though she stresses that she does not allow this to be evident to her students. She feels that the motivation behind some decisions, such as allowing students to re-take the test more regularly, is driven by financial considerations. She also feels that the Speaking Test is not a good predictor of what students are capable of achieving through the spoken mode. Like P2, she also believes that there should be feedback provided to students on their test performance.

Consistent across all sources of data for P3 is her orientation toward co-operative and discovery-based learning. When asked what she felt is the students' main role in her IELTS classes, she replied:

I think they're teaching and learning at the same time, I don't believe that they're just learners. I thanked a lot of them today for helping their peers, giving advice to their peers and teaching their peers more and more about their errors or their strategies and I think it's a lot to do with group work and collaboration, feedback. So, yeah I think they have a teaching role as well. (P3)

P3 sees a large part of her role in the IELTS class as being to set up activities in which her students can learn from each other. To facilitate this aim, she privileges the teaching of a variety of strategies the students can use to perform tasks and activities, including test tasks. P3 views these roles for both the students and the teacher as similar for all language courses. When asked to elaborate upon this, she used language-learning strategies as an example, stating that 'good strategies and techniques' can be applied to all areas of language learning, including test preparation courses. P3 expresses the hope that her students will apply these strategies, together with 'study skills', in a variety of ways, regardless of what course they are taking.

P3 relies almost exclusively on IELTS preparation course books to stay up to date about the test. Indeed, she suggests the writers of these books should provide professional development activities such as workshops to help teachers develop their teaching skills. P3's lack of detailed content knowledge of IELTS is possibly part of this motivation.

P3 strongly believes that the IELTS preparation class should be partly focused on test preparation, but also partly on general educational goals. She has an interest in broadening the content areas that her students are exposed to, while at the same time, motivating them to actively participate in class. It was difficult across all data sets to determine any principles operating for P3's selection and transformation of IELTS test content for classroom teaching, which is also possibly explained by her lack of detailed content knowledge of IELTS.

She expressed the belief that students at lower proficiency levels require more language input, which appears to be mainly verb tenses and collocations, while students at higher levels merely need to hone their test-taking strategies.

[I] would probably have more of a language focus with the lower level learners than say with the higher level learners who probably need just a little bit of encouragement and a few more strategies because they're so close to their scores. (P3)

Teaching and learning activity in the observed lesson closely converged with P3's pedagogic content knowledge profile – *Co-operative discovery-based learning, General English style*. Her beliefs about language and language learning are evident in her classroom methodology. Clearly, as she stated in the questionnaire and later in the interview, the IELTS class should have little difference to a General English class. Features of P3's class were a high degree of peer collaboration in small groups, several open-ended discussions of a general interest nature, students left to their own devices to carry out tasks and to decide whether or not to explicitly focus on language during the tasks. In contrast to P2, there was very little didactic teaching. There was an overall, explicit reliance on the principle of students learning from each other at the expense of teacher guidance, support and intervention (apart from a repeatedly used strategy of recasting and/or restating what a student had said, usually to correct a spoken error).

There was little teaching about language or about language use, apart from an ongoing focus on collocations, which partially reflects her belief in language encoding one's thoughts. The teacher's belief in the power of small group collaboration as the primary means of classroom language learning was evident throughout this lesson.

Further, there was no explicit teaching about test-taking skills, strategies or techniques, and minimal input by way of materials. Also notable was the lack of explicit modelling or demonstrating while setting-up group, cooperative-learning tasks. For example, prior to discussing a range of questions about social networking, a list of vocabulary focused on collocations was written on the whiteboard, and the students were instructed to use some of these in the activity. An 8-minute video sourced from the internet and played three times, accompanied by a one-page worksheet were the content for almost an hour of the lesson. The expected learning outcomes in relation to IELTS test preparation were not apparent to the observer; however, P3 had commented in the interview the previous day that she planned to introduce a global issue via a video activity, because:

with the writing tasks, the speaking tasks, students have to comment on some of these global issues so I'm trying to captivate them by getting them to think about the visuals and maybe in the exam they can remember that lesson or something like that, so yeah. (P3)

The researcher noted during the observation 'this could quite easily be a General English class apart from the comment about "Speaking Test Part 3"'. There was a recurring set of curricular stages in the lesson that suggests a well-defined routine for engaging students in classroom activity. First, the students were given a task or activity to work on in small groups, with minimal preparation beforehand and teacher intervention during the task. This was followed up with whole-class, teacher-fronted question and discussion using IRF sequences, that is, Initiation by the teacher, Response from a student, Feedback from the teacher.

Clearly, P3's strong belief in students collaborating and learning from each other through group work is a significant influence on her IELTS Test preparation classroom practice.

4.3.4 Participant 4: Dogme ELT: conversation and language-based IELTS test preparation

- Male, 31–40 years
- B.Min, CELTA, Grad Cert Education (TESOL)
- Years teaching English: 4
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 4
- No training as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- No training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses

P4 conceives of language as a 'mechanism' that enables communication. This mechanism is linked to the speaker's culture and also 'sub-culture'.

Pretty strongly linked with culture and including sub-culture, so in any particular communication, you hear somebody speak, even within a culture you can tell what region they come from, what social class, what education they've had...and also even tell a lot about their personality and so on, because as they write or speak or whatever that conveys, there's more than just the meaning, I guess it's a holistic thing that's communicated there, I think. (P4)

In keeping with this socially-oriented view, P4 considers classroom language learning to best be carried out 'in context', in a 'natural environment', in which interpersonal relations are casual and interactions authentic, or quasi-authentic.

I'd say, the most authentic that we can get in a classroom is just that conversation and then clarification that takes place when somebody asks a question...But aside from that, I guess we try and simulate discussion. (P4)

P4 is concerned about bridging the gap between some IELTS tasks that he sees as inauthentic and the classroom talk, which he desires to be authentic.

It's most real, I think, when they're doing interaction, but still to them the question comes and, I guess, in relation to IELTS it would be...how natural...can talking about...describing a graph be? How are you going to create that kind of environment? (P4)

To capitalise on these ‘natural’ episodes of classroom interaction, P4 states that he like to allow ‘tangents’ to the classroom talk to occur, which he sees as providing opportunities to focus on language that emerges from the talk for learning and teaching purposes. This approach is clearly evident in his classroom teaching, for example, at the start of class the whole group was talking about the weather, and during this time, P4 availed of moments to teach a new vocabulary item or correct a student’s use of an expression or a vocabulary item. This is what he sees as the ‘context’ of the lesson that is of primary importance for him. He also encourages students to develop their confidence by challenging their ideas and opinions, and by guiding the classroom talk in various ways.

I will guide the discussion towards the conclusion and confirming...what’s the right answer and why. So I would see my style as being facilitatory, rather than more didactic. (P4)

P4’s responses suggest more content knowledge of the Academic rather than the General Training module of IELTS. This is probably due to the fact that he is teaching students who are mainly taking the Academic module. It is interesting to note that P4 sees the main purpose of IELTS in relation to its measurement of academic and professional contexts, using the terms ‘professions’ and ‘white-collar professions’. He does not mention its purpose of selecting for migration or more general work contexts. This may be a reflection of the fact that P4 is not an IELTS examiner and that he states the belief that IELTS is only suitable for assessing for ‘undergraduate study and professional work’ but not for postgraduate and vocational study or immigration.

P4’s attitude toward IELTS is generally negative. Some of these areas are mentioned above – the inclusion of spelling in the grading criteria for the Listening Test, the authenticity of some of the test tasks, and the potential for subjectivity by the examiners of the Speaking and Writing Tests.

Dogme ELT (Meddings and Thornbury, 20120) is a recent language teaching movement focusing on authentic classroom interaction, with the aim of foregrounding the language created by the students during meaningful communicative exchanges. A Dogme syllabus treats this ‘emergent language’ as authentic classroom material in favour of the content of course books and other materials (Chappell, 2014b). P4’s orientation to teaching IELTS preparation is best categorised as Dogme ELT, in which he favours the kinds of talk and interaction patterns conducive to exploring and creating new knowledge and ideas. From the talk emerge many teaching moments in the form of new vocabulary, techniques for approaching a test task, and more.

P4 favours this approach for all English language courses he teaches. However, he claims to favour a more deductive methodology for IELTS, ‘starting with a goal and then working backwards’, in contrast to general English courses, where the lesson will move more gradually through a series of integrated activities, such as a warm-up activity focused on vocabulary building, and then a general conversation activity, followed by a reading task, and then focusing on some detailed language.

P4 views IELTS preparation as primarily a language course as opposed to one focused on test preparation, albeit one ‘restricted to the context of a test’. Indeed, he feels that students would benefit from attending his course even if they did not have a goal of attending university, due to the kinds of language they would learn.

The range of vocabulary and grammar involved can be useful, in addition to understanding differences between informal/formal language, structuring speaking with fluency markers, etc. (P4)

Perhaps partly due to his orientation toward seeking authentic communication with his students, P4 gains most of his information about changes to IELTS from his students, claiming any regular communication he receives from IELTS is not particularly useful. While he uses published materials, his mainstay is working collaboratively with students on test tasks using his own materials, involving significant whole class and small group interaction.

Sometimes I’ll...be inductive then I’ll throw an essay in and then we’ll deconstruct it, okay, here’s a bunch of some of the errors, how could we have done this better. So it lends itself more towards starting with a goal and then working backwards. (P4)

The lesson observed was notable for the level of student engagement and the numerous opportunities P4 took to turn a student’s statement or question into a teaching opportunity. He introduced activities that could well have been used in a General English lesson, however, that turned out to be linked to an IELTS practice test activity for the Academic Writing Task 1. In the lesson observed, the first stage involved modelling and demonstrating a task through scaffolded whole-class and small group sub-tasks, focusing on language issues that emerged during interactions. Materials used were authentic web-sourced materials (not IELTS-related) that were embedded into tasks and activities to simulate an IELTS test task. The second stage was for the students to undertake a similar task using data from official IELTS materials. The lesson observed was notable for the level of student engagement and the numerous opportunities P4 took to turn a student’s statement or question into a teaching moment. In many respects, P4’s orientation to IELTS preparation is language-based test preparation, as he engages the students in simulated IELTS test tasks and elicits discussion about the context-specific uses of language for the task.

4.3.5 Participant 5: Scaffolded learner-centred IELTS test preparation

- Female, 31–40 years.
- BA Media and Communications/Diploma Secondary Teaching (English and Media)/TESOL
- Years teaching English: 7
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 2
- No training as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- Some training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses (elective in postgraduate study)

‘Communication’ and ‘having a communicative purpose’, followed by ‘vocabulary’ are what comes to mind when P5 considers what constitutes language. This flows into her approach to teaching in which she foregrounds for her students the communicative event – ‘having a clear purpose for why they’re speaking or doing a task’. While she considers grammar important, ‘the idea of language having a function’ is considered most important. With similarities to the Situational Approach, which privileges linking knowledge of linguistic structures to situations in which they may be used (Richards and Rodgers, 2014), P5 remarks:

So we look at things like a function might be something like expressing opinion, making a preference, making comparisons and trying to give them the situation or the context where they’re able to do those things. (P5)

For the IELTS class, P5 elaborates:

I do lots of task-based learning, lots of communication, which they love, they really enjoy it, it has multiple functions, not only is their English increasing really fast but they’re enjoying the social aspect of speaking with each other. (P5)

Thus, when focusing on the macro-skill of speaking, P5’s students’ enjoyment of language lessons is important just as much as task-based, communicative activities are. When teaching writing, she places a greater emphasis on grammar.

And then through writing I teach grammar, so I’ll give them structures that they need to use in their writing in order to do well. (P5)

For lessons focused on reading or listening, P5 focuses on strategies for efficiently working with texts, including increasing the amount of talking she does to convey correct answers to exercises and provide instructions. She strives for this during pair and group work, too:

I choose to get them to paraphrase a lot, get them to report back on what they’ve spoken about and I do that deliberately so that they’re listening to their partner and having to think about what their partner has said, recognise the main ideas of what their partner has said and I find that that helps. (P5)

P5 has an average level of content knowledge about IELTS, despite being proactive in learning more about the test (see below). Her attitude toward the test is positive overall, with no specific negative comments made. She believes the purpose of the test is to ‘assess’ and ‘test students’ ability’. She expands on this by suggesting that the assessment is made across all four key skills areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Although she understands that IELTS does not include a section that specifically tests grammar, it is clear that she feels that the test does do this, as well as vocabulary testing, through its various question types.

P5 does not clearly articulate the difference in purpose between the two test formats as she suggests that both modules are really about showing ‘how proficiently the user will be able to use English in their everyday lives’. There is also no mention of the General Training module being used for migration purposes. This response may be influenced by the fact that this participant is not an IELTS examiner and has been teaching IELTS preparation courses for the reasonably short time of two years.

P5’s pedagogical content knowledge base has many similarities to P1’s, hence the same description has been used – *Scaffolded learner-centred IELTS test preparation*. Her orientation to teaching IELTS test preparation locates the students at the centre of classroom activity, with them actively carrying out tasks and activities, and the teacher providing guidance and support. The students’ motivation to learn is important for her (‘they need to come in wanting to learn’) as is their ability to carry out small group communicative tasks with considerable direct intervention from the teacher.

I’m constantly watching, they love feedback, so I’ll constantly call something out and say, right, no, it’s like this or give them a little bit of correction, which they enjoy. (P5)

The belief in the effectiveness of error correction and other forms of in-class teacher feedback is a defining feature of P5’s orientation to teaching IELTS preparation. This is a reflection of her belief that teaching IELTS is different from teaching general English, because it involves students who have clearly defined goals and purposes which she explicitly addresses. She persists with this strategy despite some students’ sensitivity toward being corrected, and attempts to condition them by introducing them to it early into the course. Feedback is not a defining feature of P5’s general English courses for these reasons, although in both courses she will focus on ‘the general skills and communicative language functions [that] can be applied in different areas of life’.

I give more feedback in this course than I would a general English course, which involves them having to trust me and be comfortable with me saying no, that’s not right... it’s very feedback driven, it’s meeting lots of different needs. (P5)

P5's strategies for building her content knowledge base for IELTS are far more extensive than those of others in this study. She regularly reads web pages on the IELTS website ('Cambridge has lots of information'), searches out blogs written by other teachers, reads the Australia Network website, accesses new IELTS preparation course books, and even consults with IELTS examiners. Although she is not an examiner herself, she values the pedagogic utility of examiners' knowledge, and plans one day to train to be one.

I will go and talk to the examiners and say well, am I doing this right and is this what this criteria is and I do seek out their opinions to make sure that I'm equipping the students the best that I can. (P5)

Being an examiner would provide her with 'more knowledge about the test, more knowledge about how they're assessed...[and] more empathy of the situation'.

P5 combines an orientation to communicative language teaching principles with the belief in focused practice of test tasks. Her strategy for presenting IELTS test content is to work backwards from a full day of test practice, which occurs weekly on a Friday. The first four days of the week are what she calls 'skill building', which is a focus on developing the macro-skills and their enabling sub-skills, such as 'new vocabulary...skimming or scanning for information, or identifying a writer's opinion...[and] certain grammar structures...that they may need to know'. Her strategy for selecting and transforming content in an accessible way for students is to use authentic content that is unrelated to IELTS in the first four days of the week to support the development of skills, for example, TED Talks for academic spoken language, newspaper reports, authentic presentations to model discourse markers, and the rhetorical staging of a presentation or report.

The observed lesson is a clear example of P5's pedagogical content knowledge profile, indicating a clear alignment of her knowledge and beliefs about IELTS and her classroom practice. Regular communicative language teaching activities focused on one or more of the macro-skills were linked to the IELTS test tasks. For example, one activity involved the students discussing a range of statements related to an IELTS-type topic (happiness). The students were instructed to agree or disagree with these statements, supporting their opinions using appropriate language functions. The teacher sought to optimise the amount of time the students were using oral language by having them report to the class at the end of the activity. In this stage, students reported on each other's opinions, and the teacher provided feedback mainly through error correction. The lesson progressed to the next stage through linking to a related topic, depression, and an activity where the focus was on pragmatic functions, vocabulary and collocations.

4.3.6 Participant 6: General English communicative language teaching

- Male, 41–50 years
- MA in TESOL and Applied Linguistics
- Years teaching English: 23
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 7
- Recently trained as an IELTS Speaking Examiner
- No training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses

P6 was quick to provide a pedagogic perspective on language, referring to 'CLT' (Communicative Language Teaching) and the four macro-skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking). He claims to integrate the four macro-skills into tasks in what he refers to as a 'whole language approach'. P6 did not elaborate further, however, he aligned this view of language with the convenience of teaching IELTS.

Listening, reading, writing and speaking and it's wonderful because with that I like to always use... the IELTS public band score descriptors with students... But with language particularly, yeah, just looking at CLT and always having this whole language approach of every task needs to have more or less those four areas that you're using. (P6)

P6 did not express his beliefs about how a second language is learned, relying on his stated belief in CLT to answer the interviewer's question. Indeed, when probed later in the interview, he demonstrated difficulty in articulating a theory of learning. Despite 27 years of language teaching experience, P6 appears to focus his attention more on his teaching methodology and less on language learning processes. Thus, his practical pedagogical wisdom is skewed toward a theory of teaching rather than learning. Key aspects of teaching are positive affective factors, being 'firm but fair', injecting 'fun' into lessons, and making the content practical for the students. It could be inferred that successful learning depends on the students being in a positive affective state, where they find the lessons enjoyable and practical.

P6 has an extremely positive attitude toward IELTS in general, an attitude that has recently formed as a result of him being trained as an IELTS examiner. This has had an unexpected result on his teaching approach, in that he will now use IELTS materials and methodology with his General English classes as well as his IELTS classes (which combines EAP and IELTS students).

I give more or less a watered down version if I'm doing an Intermediate General English or Upper Int[ermediate]. I give a watered down version of IELTS by using instant IELTS materials that...the textbook 'cause it waters it down. I don't like to use "waters it down" but it makes it more interesting for them, rather than just shooting from a very, very, high range and over their heads. So...yeah. (P6)

P6, as with many of the other participant's responses, highlights the main purpose of the IELTS test as being 'to test' both academic and general language ability. He believes that one of the main differences between the two modules is to test a candidate's understanding of 'complex academic language' and in so doing, provides evidence of a more specific and tailored view of the difference in the two modules. However, it does indicate that he may be a little unclear on the differences as he notes the role of the General Training module is to assess proficiency for college and high school, which is usually the role of the Academic module.

It is worth noting that this participant is a newly qualified IELTS examiner and that the classes he was teaching at the time of the research were a mixture of Academic, General Training candidates and general English students. This participant was also the only one to respond incorrectly to a question about specific knowledge of the test suggesting that there is still room for improvement in his content knowledge base of IELTS.

As noted earlier, P6 professes to be an 'IELTS fan'. He suggests that he has integrated his orientations to IELTS preparation and General English courses to such an extent that it would be difficult to determine which course he was teaching merely through classroom observation. Perhaps his statement about his approach to teaching IELTS preparation best sums up this orientation.

It's not just a test prep course where you come in and sit and listen to the teacher talk. But it's about us exchanging ideas within the realms of the theme that we're doing and as well focus on...particular IELTS skills...I think my students see it as a time during the day where they can come in and forget about their problems and forget about their worries and get their mind off family and homesickness. (P6)

Since starting to teach IELTS courses, P6 has adopted an overall approach informed by his knowledge about and positive attitudes toward IELTS band descriptors. Indeed, when teaching a general English course, he claims to 'give a watered down version of IELTS...[to] make it more interesting for them'. He also declared his methodological approach as 'whole language with an IELTS twist'.

P6 views himself as a member of a community of IELTS teachers and examiners and actively seeks out social networking opportunities 'to become members and associate myself with people across Australia who are also IELTS examiners'. This is his main way to build his content knowledge base of IELTS, analysis of which in the previous section suggests some opportunities to develop.

P6 presents the content of IELTS by linking it to his students' everyday lives, regardless of whether or not they have an interest in IELTS.

IELTS is not just a test. It's practical in so many ways in everyday society and that's where I go when I pull out the band descriptors and I say look, you could use this in everyday life. (P6)

Unsurprisingly, his strategies for engaging his students with IELTS content are similar across courses, and conforms with a range of communicative language teaching practices, where students who are busily engaged communicating with each other, with 'a lot of chatting going on' is the norm. It is this amalgam of strategies for engaging the students and strategies for selecting and transforming IELTS content that distinguishes P6 from other participants in this study. While he has a relatively sound knowledge of IELTS, including a declared comprehensive knowledge of the band descriptors, P6 was the least articulate in expressing beliefs about language and learning in general.

The observed lesson was testament to this unique profile of P6's pedagogical content knowledge base. It was consistent with P6's rather general views of language, learning and teaching. Like the lesson taught by P3, the lesson was hard to distinguish from a General English lesson. Regular communicative language teaching activities were used, for example, split reading, students being grouped according to how strongly they agree or disagree with a proposition, and general discussion tasks involving expressing agreement or disagreement. Materials were from an IELTS course book (*IELTS in Context*) and a General English course book (*New English File*), which were the source of tasks and exercises.

The teacher monitored unobtrusively and did not intervene in the group work. He emphasised desirable reading strategies in a general sense without referring to IELTS tasks. In between group work, the teacher tended toward a relatively verbose form of didacticism, occasionally using IRF, with an emphasis on correct language use.

For all intents and purposes the lesson was a General English language-based lesson with very little explicit knowledge included about IELTS test-taking. Indeed, it is likely that P6's general pedagogic knowledge base is the main influence on his pedagogical content knowledge, followed by his content knowledge of IELTS, with what appears to be only a marginal contribution from his practical pedagogical wisdom, which lacks clarity.

4.3.7 Participant 7: Authentic, content-based, integrated skills EAP

- Female, 31–40 years
- B Ed, Ba (Hons), DELTA
- Years teaching English: 11
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 5
- No training as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- Some training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses (Certificate in International Test Preparation)

Like P6, P7 also has difficulty articulating her understandings about language. She did not make an explicit statement about language as a system or a tool for communication; rather, she talked about the opportunities a second language offers learners. She did this through referring to her own experience as an English language learner. Indeed, P7 was more explicit with her beliefs about second language learning, explaining the differences between learning an L2 as a child and an adult, again with reference to her own experiences.

So I actually went through the process of learning English. Obviously as a child it was a lot quicker, a lot easier, a lot less stressful but I know that because of having learned English, a wealth of opportunities opened up to me, that I wouldn't have otherwise had. Also having that experience as a child I think I have a different perspective on the fact that, at different stages of life people do learn languages in very different ways and their own perceptions about how easy or difficult that process is, or the stress that that carries can change and that affects the process. (P7)

For P7, there is no single best way to learn a language, however, grammar figures strongly in her belief about what students need to learn in order to be successful with the IELTS test.

The IELTS test does not have a grammar test section but I do include grammar instruction in my lessons as it's very clear to me that the students desperately need this. (P7)

Learner differences are significant in her view, such as aptitude, motivation, learning preferences (e.g. learning lists of vocabulary). However, what seems crucial to her is real-life exposure, even immersion, in the language, both outside and inside the classroom.

I think...at this college particularly, what we try to do is we try to get them to live the language. So throughout this building and actually sort of the nearby area, we've got a really strict English only policy. So that kind of forces them, at least for let's say, six hours of the day to actually be immersed in an English environment. We can't control what happens when they go home, obviously.

With students in terms of outside of classroom activities, we get them involved in things like volunteering and charity events so that they're actually interacting with real Australians who aren't teachers and again that's that reality check sometimes.

Within the classroom I do try to challenge them. With my Upper Intermediates particularly I tell them that I'm going to try to talk to them like human beings, not like students. In that I will speak faster. I will throw them expressions that I know they don't know but I explain that to them, that I'm doing that on purpose and I do want them to stop me and pick up those things that they thought I said, but they weren't sure about. So it's exposure as well and yeah, just giving them the kind of tasks that help them. (P7)

In terms of language teaching, P7 again states that learner differences are important and teachers' attempts to balance these differences when planning lessons are vital.

Some students, they need more grammar. They need more, here's the rule, here's some drill practise, go off and do it. Other students, they just want more of that confidence building interaction. So I think... a good teacher balances all the needs of all the students. I mean it's impossible at times to help everybody but you try to balance it so that overall, the class as a whole is getting little bits of everything, I think. (P7)

P7's responses suggest her practical pedagogical wisdom informs her classroom practice largely through the belief in the importance of grammar, learner differences, learner agency, and tailoring teaching to these differences. However, see the discussion of her pedagogical content knowledge, below, for the contradictions in her beliefs and practice.

P7, similar to P9 below, provides lengthy responses to questions about her content knowledge of IELTS that include comments of an historical nature. For example, when stating what she believed the purpose of the test to be, she responded:

The original purpose of the IELTS test was to judge whether or not international students would have the language and academic skills required to cope in an English-speaking tertiary education setting. I still think this is the purpose of the Academic test, though I'm not sure that I agree it's a good way to test the preparedness of students planning to enter vocational study at TAFE (especially for the more practical subjects like automotive mechanics, cookery, dental assisting etc.). I certainly do not think that the IELTS test should be used for migration purposes as that was not what it was originally designed for and I do not believe is "fit for purpose" in that newer context. (P7)

P7 believes the General Training module is not 'fit for purpose' with respect to its use to select candidates for migration. As mentioned in the previous section, she holds a range of positive and negative attitudes and beliefs about IELTS that are largely centred on the expansion of the applications of the test from its original uses. P7 has an extensive content knowledge base of the test that reveals itself in her classroom practice.

Principles of teaching EAP are evident in P7's orientation to teaching IELTS preparation. She believes in carefully guiding students one step at a time in the academic skills that are important, yet an implicit, part of IELTS, since she sees the test as a gateway to university. P7 views this as a potential point of tension between the students' expectations and her lesson plans, as she reports that students would prefer to be 'getting straight into it and doing the questions from the test'. A second feature of her orientation to teaching IELTS is the goal of integrating the macro-skills, a hallmark of communicative language teaching. This goal is built on the use of real world content introduced through activities based on the macro-skills (see below for more details on the observed lesson).

P7 articulates the difference in her orientation to IELTS and General English in terms of classroom management issues and the content of lessons. She sees the need to strongly manage the pacing, organisation and goal orientation of IELTS preparation lessons; whereas, General English classes are more flexible and have goals that are less rigid. Further, she views the more specialist and discipline-specific content as a point of difference. General English courses have more everyday content: 'about food competitions or like everyday life or stories'.

P7 also indicates that differences in her orientation to teaching both courses are becoming less noticeable. Since teaching IELTS, she believes she has become a better teacher all round, and is able to transfer the classroom management skills she has developed to other courses. This professional development trajectory is reflected in the ways P7 keeps up to date with information about IELTS. She has undertaken postgraduate study in international test preparation and continues to access material of a more academic nature about IELTS and international tests in general.

As mentioned above, P7's strategies for presenting IELTS content are built on a framework of integrated skills with authentic, discipline-specific content. She identifies as 'an expert on the test', and uses this expertise to introduce information about IELTS during these content-based, integrated skills lessons. This also serves to engage the students with the content, especially when they are interested in the topics and themes.

It's not something that you choose to do in your free time and so I kind of force them to do it, throughout the course but I think, it's always great when they get enthused about some of the topics or yeah they just ...they learn. (P7)

Indeed, P7 declares that she also engages happily with the content, which can be seen to be a positive factor in motivating the students. Recall in an earlier section, P7's positive attitude towards IELTS is partly due to its predilection for worldly content, which is also reflected in her following comment:

I've always been interested in science and so I love the fact that you get to read articles where you learn things that you didn't know before. And that just... that makes me happy. (P7)

The observed lesson reflects the profile of a focus on content and skills. In the lesson, speaking, listening and reading using content focused on social relations in online social networking were introduced through a research article. Students shared opinions during an introductory speaking activity, with the stated goal of expressing opinions meaningfully. This moved into another speaking activity focused on academic discussion, with a language focus of justifying opinions. This also provided the teacher the opportunity to record emerging, relevant vocabulary on the whiteboard for a subsequent stage of the lesson. The article for reading was then methodically introduced (genre, rhetorical staging of the text), and the students guided through a detailed reading of it to identify the key themes and main ideas. She represented the stages of the research process and the stages of the research article in simplistic terms but in a way that fits in with IELTS reading texts.

There appeared to be no great difference to an EAP skills-based lesson, suggesting the teacher applies the same pedagogical content knowledge to both courses. While the lesson observed reflected her claim that she likes to challenge the students by speaking at natural speed and making the classroom language accessible to the students by using the whiteboard for recording new vocabulary, for example, there was little unambiguous evidence that she had planned a lesson based on balancing individual learner differences. While the difficulty in achieving this is well documented in the literature, the fact that it was absent from her lesson suggests a divergence of her stated beliefs and her classroom practice. Further, as the quote from her questionnaire responses, above, indicates, P7 has a strong belief in building grammar into her lessons. However, this was not apparent in her interview or in the lesson observed. In fact, a statement from her interview almost contradicts the statement from her questionnaire.

Some students, they need more grammar. They need more, here's the rule, here's some drill practise, go off and do it. Other students, they just want more of that confidence building interaction. (P7)

This contradiction is most likely an outcome of the tension between two beliefs – first, that all students require grammar instruction, regardless of their differences, and second, students' individual differences should be taken into consideration in IELTS lessons. It is a good lesson in the need to collect and interrogate a range of data that captures a teacher's stated beliefs and actual practice.

4.3.8 Participant 8: Scaffolded learner-centred IELTS test preparation lesson

- Female, 31–40 years
- CELTA, DELTA, currently studying Masters in TESOL
- Years teaching English: 11
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 4
- No training as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- No formal training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses (although has participated in in-service training workshops)

For P8, language is synonymous with communicating, and the spoken mode comes immediately to her mind.

Language for me, it's synonym to communicating and primarily maybe spoken...I'm just thinking spoken language...as opposed to written but I'm just thinking, yeah as a way of communicating between people. (P8)

P8 does not elaborate any further on her beliefs about what constitutes language. When asked about her beliefs regarding language learning, however, she quite clearly states that there is no one best way to learn a language due to individual learner differences. Referring to her own experiences as an English L2 learner:

I don't think there is a best way to learn language because...to learn languages, because everybody's different. For example, I learn by listening but also need reading and writing but I don't learn by...oh passive learning's not for me and I know that within my students, some of them...or like some of them have learnt their language just by listening and you can see it in their grammar and their sentence structure is all over the place. But they can communicate as opposed to others that have learnt it in a much more systematical way...systematic way and then...so they are very good on paper but then they can't speak. (P8)

This belief in the importance of individual learner differences influences the way that P8 says she teaches, along similar lines to what P7 reported. When asked how she supports her learners in class, she responded:

I guess by doing different activities and...trying different styles that might suit people. Some people more and others less at times but by kind of balancing it. (P8)

It seems clear that P8 does not have a well-developed content knowledge base of IELTS; indeed, referencing this participant against her interview responses and observation notes, this would appear to be the case as she is not an IELTS examiner, although she has been teaching preparation courses for four years.

Her understanding of the purpose of IELTS is stated in general terms – ‘to assess a level of English competency’, which she did not elaborate upon when prompted. She was also somewhat general in her explanation of how the two modules differ, stating that the Academic module is ‘aimed at people who want to further their studies in an English-speaking context’, while the General Training module is more ‘for visa and work purpose’.

P8's orientation to teaching IELTS is similar to P1's and P5's in that there is an overall tendency for test preparation-focused student activity to be taking place with ongoing teacher guidance and support. Despite her declaration that her IELTS courses are more teacher-fronted than other courses, such as General English, P8's overall orientation to teaching and learning IELTS is to support and guide students during interaction that is focused on students' existing knowledge beliefs and experiences. Perhaps the main difference between IELTS and General English is her belief that students in IELTS courses have a lower tolerance for and proclivity towards classroom activity involving peer feedback and correction, preferring to have these supports for learning coming from the teacher.

P8 keeps her content knowledge about IELTS up to date through regular discussions with colleagues, reading literature on IELTS, and ad hoc activities, such as online chats with course book writers. While she is overall positively disposed to IELTS, P8 does not see it as particularly fair, as the relevant modules are not good predictors of test-takers' performance in academic or professional contexts.

Her strategies for presenting the content are a combination of didactic explanations, providing information at ‘point of need’ during learning activities, and demonstrating and modelling desirable test-taking behaviours and strategies. Two notable strategies for transforming the knowledge and making it accessible for her students are firstly, to provide simplified models, for example, with speaking, she emphasises the criteria for success as being in four proficiency areas: vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation, which is a simplification of the band descriptors. Secondly, she makes extensive use of students' existing knowledge, having them share between each other in whole class discussions. Both of these strategies do not require the teacher to have an extensive content knowledge base for IELTS, and may account for the lack of explicit information about IELTS in her lesson.

She also simplifies criteria for success in other areas, possibly to the point of being ineffective, for example, ‘use different tenses when speaking’. This may also be partly due to her belief that most of the students she teaches in the General Training preparation course have low levels of first language literacy.

Most of the students who are doing...the General Training test, they've stopped school very early. So they've never learned how to write an essay in their own language. They've never learnt all those things. (P8)

P8 engages her students by showing that she values their existing knowledge, experiences and attitudes. She will invite discussion of various aspects of the test and encourage students to share and respond to each other's contributions. She also encourages them to be more reflective of their learning and self-critical, for example, by recording themselves during a communicative activity in class, then listening back and identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

In the lesson observed, P8 certainly presented evidence for valuing the students' existing knowledge, opinions and attitudes about IELTS, often eliciting these forms of knowledge in whole class format in order to share it with other students (using lots of IRF sequences). She represented the important aspects of the Speaking Test through four aspects mentioned above: vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation, that are very similar to the band descriptors, but she made them more accessible for students by simplifying them to general statements of what the students need to do in each area (e.g. use different tenses).

Activities were common communicative language teaching activities that promoted communication between students but did not overly challenge them linguistically. The teacher provided varying levels of support and modelling as the activity unfolded, generally simplifying tasks.

There did not appear to be any explicit allowance made for individual learner differences, as students were directed to complete each stage of the activity. While the difficulty in achieving this is well documented in the literature, the fact that it was absent from her lesson suggests one area of divergence of her stated beliefs and her classroom practice.

Some stages allowed for relatively free-flowing student conversation; for example, students were asked to work in small groups and describe their hometowns. This reflects to some extent P8's belief in the primacy of spoken communication.

Overall, there is a good deal of synergy between the beliefs she states, her practical pedagogical wisdom, and her classroom practice.

4.3.9 Participant 9: IELTS information sessions

- Male, 51–60 years
- MA (TESOL), Cert 4 TEA, RSA Dip, Cert TEFLA
- Years teaching English: 34
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 10
- Trained as an IELTS Speaking Examiner and Writing Assessor
- No formal training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses (although has participated in in-service training workshops)

P9 conceives of language along two levels – its functional, goal-oriented nature, and its structure and grammar, stating the belief that 'language is a means to achieve something, whether they're [i.e. the students] trying to achieve university entrance, TAFE certificates, communicating with Australians on the street...it's definitely a means to an end'. For IELTS classes, P9's view of language is narrow in scope, related to the criteria for assessing the macro-skills.

In the IELTS, it's not theoretical, it's specifically to achieve the purpose to get particular bands that fulfil the criteria, like fluency, accuracy and speaking, you know, organisation, position, content, ideas in writing. (P9)

This is in contrast to a broader view of language for a direct-entry EAP class, where he feels the students should have greater linguistic proficiency.

I mean there [in EAP classes] you're going through more of the grammar and stuff because...if they're going to university you want them to...obviously the ideas are still important, but you want them to have more accurate grammar and you want them to have more sentence grammar, so you want them to have complex grammar and formal language and stuff. Because I'm always emphasising IELTS is a pre-university course so you can't expect them to write formal English and stuff can you, not necessarily, because...that's not what they're after at IELTS. (P9)

This belief that IELTS is 'pre-university' and at a lower level than EAP is a misunderstanding and reflects a somewhat impoverished view of the test. It is certainly not reflective of what is considered one of the primary roles of IELTS: to 'assess the English language proficiency of people who want to study or work where English is the language of communication' (IELTS, 2012).

In terms of his beliefs about how second languages are effectively learned, P9 responds with a rhetorical question: 'Well of course the focus is more on using language isn't it?' He elaborates upon this by suggesting that authentic materials should be used to provide the students with sufficient exposure to English, citing 'natural speed, normal content, authentic content'. He states a recurrent belief that many of his learners lack exposure to authentic language and, therefore, have undeveloped receptive skills. For example, talking about authentic listening texts, he suggests that many international students' listening skills are 'hopeless, absolutely hopeless...it's a real shock for them'.

P9's questionnaire response indicates his view of teaching IELTS as being focused solely on test preparation, which he justifies by reference to students' needs (requirements).

I teach a very specific course that focuses on test preparation (sic). There is a lot of exam content tips and strategies. Very little time for group work. Pairwork only in speaking...The skills required are very specific, and you can produce immediate results in a short time IF their language is the required level (*capitalisation for emphasis in original*). (P9)

This is reinforced in a statement from the interview in which he refers to students' needs as the motivating force behind his classroom approach.

Because its needs based isn't it? And you know, that's what all the students...you teach to their needs, so if they're TAFE students, they need to get out in the community, if they're EAP they need to be university level, if they're IELTS they need to handle, you know. So, it is a preparation course in the true sense of the word, it's not really teaching them the language, its four hours times four weeks to learn about the test. (P9)

P9 has been involved with English language teaching for many years and claims to have been involved with IELTS since its inception. He holds somewhat strong views, both positive and negative, about IELTS and while he has an extensive content knowledge base about its mechanics and format, he demonstrates incomplete knowledge about the differences between the two modules. His comment that the 'General Training should be more general in scope' implies that he does not see this module as a test of general English ability as it currently stands. He is clearly not at all supportive of the current General Training module and feels that it does not test the skills necessary to 'survive/thrive in an English-speaking environment'.

His belief in the overall purpose of ELTS is 'to ensure students are at a suitable level to commence academic study and professional training'. He adds to this his strong view that it is not suitable for migration purposes.

He also believes that candidates taking the General Training module do not require academic skills, therefore arguing that the General Training module should be more general in scope.

They need to demonstrate a level of English necessary to survive/thrive in an English speaking environment, this is different from the Academic requirements...there desperately needs to be a different listening test, plus the scoring for the speaking should be different if the format is to remain the same I think. (P9)

P9's orientation to teaching IELTS preparation is best summed up by the descriptor *IELTS information sessions*. He states that in IELTS he is 'telling them' more, as well as 'concentrating on tips and strategies', such as reading the question, using reading skills, such as guessing words from context. Due to course time constraints, he views his role as 'like the teach-test-teach program without the last teach' – he tells them about the test and/or skills and strategies and then expects them to practise this in their own (out-of-class) time, with minimal feedback and a general disconnect between lessons. In a nutshell, he tells the students what he thinks they need to know in order 'to pass' (that is, get their required band scores).

P9 is a veteran IELTS teacher and examiner, having worked for many years in numerous countries as an English teacher involved with IELTS. He projects the identity of a highly knowledgeable insider whose length of tenure equates to authority and knowledgeability. His very membership of the inside community provides him with the content knowledge needed to carry out his teaching role. This superior knowledge, however, does not come through clearly in the earlier analysis of teachers' content knowledge.

P9 has a straightforward strategy for presenting IELTS content. It involves written and spoken instructional and expositional language delivered in a monologic, didactic mode. Indeed, he estimates that over 60% of class time is allocated to information about contents and format of the test, looking at past tests and taking practice tests. He does not appear to value student engagement, viewing the students as recipients and processors of the information that he provides them.

There is a lot of exam content tips and strategies. Very little time for group work. Pair work only in speaking. (P9)

When asked what he felt was his students' role in his class, he responded 'practising the materials, sending my writing answers, and familiarising themselves with all the materials I give them'. There seems to be an implicit hindrance to accessing the wealth of general pedagogic knowledge that a teacher with his history has accumulated. This might be partly attributed to the short (four hours over four Saturdays) time available to deliver the course, but would still leave teacher educators baffled.

He acknowledges the time constraints in his response to 'any other comments' in the questionnaire.

The type of course I teach now is very different from the longer type I've previously taught of 40 hours upwards, where I was able to concentrate on more general skills including vocabulary acquisition and grammar improvement/refinement. (P9)

One overriding strategy for selecting and transforming content about IELTS into an accessible form for the students was to introduce a rubric for the macro-skills involved in the test. This is 'content, organisation, vocabulary and grammar'. Otherwise, the content was represented in series of packets of information, such as for Writing Task 1, photocopied from the course book, *Action Plan*.

- information about content, organisation, vocabulary and grammar
- information about the test day (for writing)
- information about how writing is assessed
 - Task 1 overview is essential (academic)
 - select the features from the diagram
 - the purpose of the letter (general)
 - three bullet points (general)
 - use the right tone (formality)

The classroom observation reflected P9's practical pedagogical wisdom for teaching an IELTS preparation course. In this first class of the short course (four weeks), he provided the students with a significant amount of information through instructional and expository talk. That is, he adopted a didactic approach where he produced all the talk and the students were passive listeners. Surprisingly, they were not given the opportunity to get to know each other, even learn each other's names, nor to ask questions or comment. Apart from a 10-minute activity in which the students were asked to answer several questions about themselves, their motivation for taking the IELTS test, and their perceived weaknesses (another acknowledgement of his focus on needs), P9's entire focus was on telling the students about the test and telling them test-taking tips and strategies.

The observed lesson provided an exemplar of P9's pedagogical content knowledge base. As mentioned, he delivered the content of the lesson didactically, representing the content as lists of techniques, tips, and rules to be followed in order to be successful in the test. There appeared to be no strategy for how best to represent the content in a way that was accessible for students other than exposition. The methodology was based largely on verbal and written instructions and explanations. It is a highly limited and focused example of a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge for a course in which he defines the goals and outcomes narrowly.

4.3.10 Participant 10: IELTS test preparation information exchange

- Female, 51–60 years
- CELTA, DELTA
- Years teaching English: 16
- Years teaching IELTS Preparation: 7
- Trained as an IELTS Speaking Examiner
- No training in teaching IELTS Test Preparation courses

For P10, language is all about communication, and 'developing the ability to communicate your ideas and thoughts with other people...with increasing accuracy'. This seems to be an overall theme for practical pedagogical wisdom related to language, learning and teaching, and is summed up in her statement:

For me, it's about trying to get them to communicate better with each other and clearer and just developing those skills in all the different skills areas. (P10)

Importantly for P10 are the students' motivations and needs for developing their communicative ability. She believes that a lot of students in her IELTS classes, as well as other university-based language classes do not actually need to use English beyond their studies and, therefore, they have the view that they need to function in English while in Australia but not so when they return to their country of origin to work.

There's a lot of people who are not here particularly because they want to learn English or speak English but they're here because they're from China, they have to do their masters in Australia and there's... sometimes there's a bit less interest in really...it's quite different from where I've taught before where students are studying English because they really want to communicate in English. Whereas here, it's like they've got to get through the course to go back to China and get a job kind of thing and maybe not use it, yeah, and some of them have said to me, you know, they've applied for jobs where they've had to have quite good English but it turns out that they don't actually need it, it's just another way of classifying, categorising. (P10)

When asked what she did primarily to support their learning, P10 explained that the students' affective states are very important for her in order that they can use opportunities to develop their communicative abilities by interacting confidently with each other. This relates to their future needs once they have begun their university degree.

Well partly because I think that they're going to learn better and feel happier to work with each other, 'cause we obviously do a lot of group work and things like that, but also for when they go to uni, that one of the things that the universities often, or the lectures often, say is that it's that just...being comfortable and talking to other students that often the language...the foreign students don't have. (P10)

P10's stated approach to IELTS preparation courses is different to her regular English classes in that she perceives the goal of the course to develop exam skills and strategies.

The classes are focused on a clear goal in a limited timeframe so students are generally quite focused too. Teaching focuses on skills and strategies which are practical and straightforward. (P10)

P10's belief in the overall purpose of IELTS is to 'test...language ability in the four key skills appropriate for people with a particular level of education'. This would imply she feels that IELTS is not suitable for the general population and may suggest that she has an elitist view of the test. Together with the omission of any mention of the General Training module from her responses to other questions, this does not support an in-depth content knowledge base of the IELTS modules. She talks only of candidates' ability in reading and writing, suggesting a lack of overall knowledge of IELTS and especially of the General Training module. This may be because this participant works in a university language school preparing students for tertiary study and in a context in which she is never teaching to the GT module. Overall, however, P10 has a positive disposition toward IELTS, believing it to be a fair way to test English.

The profile description for P10's pedagogical content knowledge for IELTS preparation, *IELTS test preparation information exchange*, emphasises the importance she assigns to the role of materials, specifically in the form of worksheets from published sources. These materials mediate the main activities in the class. In fact, she declares that she spends a great deal of time looking for published materials, which she uses regularly to support her teaching. She reflects that: 'I guess it's more about looking at techniques and strategies to do the test', thus, the materials provide the objects of focus for these techniques and strategies. Indeed, she estimates that half of her total class time is devoted to achieving this goal. Her reasons for basing her program on supporting test-taking techniques and strategies by using ready-made materials is based on her belief that students want efficiency in this course.

Many students want to 'cut to the chase'. They expect all activities to be directly (and visibly) relevant to the exam. (P10)

P10 has quite a different approach to her English for Academic Purposes classes, stating that: 'students going to uni would need to do much more in the way of group work, presentations and research'. However, her reference point for materials is evident in her qualification about longer EAP courses.

However, using IELTS in a longer course would be useful because I think the range and quality of materials available is excellent. I have used books in the past such as *Focus on IELTS* – their integrated approach is great, and the IELTS focus just helps to give it form, something missing from many uni prep courses which can often feel a bit 'hotch potch'. (P10)

Thus, P10's strategies for selecting, transforming and presenting the content of IELTS is through published materials, supported by explanations about techniques and strategies to complete the tasks in the worksheets. In a sense, P10 is re-using knowledge that has already been re-contextualised for IELTS teaching, rather than transforming knowledge from her content knowledge base. This may be partly due to the under-developed content knowledge base discussed above.

There are no apparent strategies for seeking engagement from her students, despite her belief in the importance of addressing the affective side of her students' learning. Perhaps the one strategy that was apparent in the classroom observation was to offer one-to-one tutorial support while the class is working on their worksheets. Indeed, she noted a main difference in her methodology as 'less focus on group work/discussion'.

In the lesson observed, there was a total focus on a single test task (Writing Task 1). The teacher privileged worksheets from published IELTS preparation course books (for example, *IELTS Test Builder*) as ways to represent the content, as well as to have the students learn through them (through tasks and exercises). In contrast to some other teachers' lessons in this study, there was a general absence of English language teaching strategies that could have generated interest and triggered engagement among the students, such as using prompts to set the theme and context of the task, relating the content to the students' own knowledge and experiences, and the like. In this respect, her orientation to classroom learning activity is similar to P3's. Analysis of all data sources suggests a disconnect between general pedagogical knowledge, practical pedagogical wisdom, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Further, P10's concern for the affective state of her learners is not apparent from her classroom observation, suggesting a convergence of stated beliefs and actual practice. She introduced a bar chart task by instructing them to read the question and then pick out some of the main/key features of the chart. There was no introduction to the chart, no familiarising the students with the topic of the chart, what it is measuring, and the like, which are all hallmarks of a teacher who is focused on the students' cognitive and affective states and who links the content to the students' own background knowledge and experiences. It has been demonstrated that models and demonstrations by the teacher are crucial to establish these links (Chappell, 2014a). Both were absent in this lesson. This is an interesting contrast with P4, who thoroughly familiarised the students with the content and themes, getting them engaged with the topic and the activity by drawing them in. P10 seemed more concerned with providing information about the bar chart and tips/strategies for approaching the analysis of the chart and less concerned with getting the students engaged with (that is, thinking and talking about) the significant things represented in the chart.

5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

5.1 The practical pedagogical wisdom of teachers: the nature of language, language learning and language teaching

In an earlier section outlining the nature of teacher knowledge, the notion of practical pedagogical wisdom is presented from the perspective of second language teaching. This theoretical orientation of a teacher to language learning and teaching can be idiosyncratic and varies across several dimensions. Interestingly, data from the teachers interviewed and whose classes were observed display this range of qualitative differences in practical pedagogical wisdom. Each participant exhibits different views about the nature of language, language learning and language teaching. The qualitative differences in these views lie in the level of clarity with which each participant articulates their beliefs, as well as how philosophically different one is from the other. For example, P6 was not able to clearly articulate his personal theory of second language learning, but was quite clear in his belief that CLT is the most effective approach to teaching. P3, on the other hand, stated quite clearly her belief in collaborative learning with minimal input from the teacher, but was not able to state an articulate theory of language. Conversely, P1 had a firm view of language as an 'agreed-upon system of meaning making', and language learning as occurring through meaningful communication and interaction.

As outlined in an earlier section, allowing for more than one method of data collection and analysis provides the opportunity to tease out and interrogate any divergences between the beliefs and knowledge that individual teachers declare and those that are evident from classroom observation (Borg, 2006). The preceding profiles have been developed through integrating the interview data with classroom observation and questionnaire data, which has allowed for such an interrogation. In general, there was considerable convergence of the teachers' beliefs about language, language learning and language teaching on the one hand, and their classroom practices on the other. For example, P3 expressed a firm belief during the interview that students can learn from each other in small group activity, both inside and outside the classroom. Her view of learning is founded on the belief that learners are, at the same time, teachers. While not linking this belief explicitly to Piagetian theory, parallels can be drawn, and evidence from the classroom observation data reveals students were offered the freedom to decide how they will work in groups, with minimal and often negligible intervention from the teacher.

The areas where there was clear convergence of teacher cognition and classroom practice are listed below.

- P1's practical pedagogical wisdom includes the notions that students are active participants in classroom learning and teachers offer contingent support and guidance in the learning activities. These notions are consistent with the way he represented knowledge about the test in class, how he set up and carried out collaborative activities, and the way he monitored and supported learners.
- There is consistency between P2's conception of language learning requiring grammatical knowledge and her pedagogical practices of explaining surface-level grammatical rules, (however, see below for an area of significant inconsistency).
- The aspect of P3's practical pedagogical wisdom related to theories of learning is revealed in her belief in students learning from each other in collaborative classroom learning activity. This is supported by her classroom practice that includes significant amounts of small group collaborative activity. Her lesson was characteristic of a General English lesson, which is also an instance of a convergence of her practical pedagogical wisdom that all lessons should be like General English lessons and her practice.
- P4's practical pedagogical wisdom for learning reveals a strong belief that classroom language learning is best carried out 'in context', in a 'natural environment', in which interpersonal relations are casual and interactions authentic, or quasi-authentic. This aligns very closely with his observed classroom practice, in which he promotes free-flowing dialogue and values congenial interpersonal relations.
- P5's notion that language is functional and goal-directed, and that learning should involve functional, goal-directed activity is evident in her pedagogical practices of having students focus on specific language functions in goal-directed classroom learning tasks.
- Part of P8's practical pedagogical wisdom for learning is to value and validate the students' existing knowledge, opinions and attitudes about IELTS, which is consistent with her practice of frequently eliciting these forms of knowledge in whole-class format in order to share it with other students.
- P9's firm belief in passing on information about the IELTS test, including tips and strategies for achieving a successful score are consistent with his classroom practice of providing information by verbal exposition.

Despite a high level of convergence, the following key divergences were found.

- Although P2 claims to view language primarily as a means of communication, there was very little communication on the part of the students, apart from listening to the teacher and, at times, answering her questions. This may reflect the teacher's underlying proclivity for more traditional pedagogic approaches.
- Although P5 articulated a belief in the value of language functions as an aspect of language, she spent much of the observed classroom time talking about word forms and grammatical accuracy, rather than functional applications. This could well be an episode where, under pressure, a teacher will resort to more traditional forms of instruction.
- Despite P7's stated belief in the importance of catering to individual learner differences, there was little evidence from the classroom observation that she had planned a lesson based on attempting to balance any individual differences apparent to her.
- In a similar vein, P8 expressed a belief in the importance of learner differences. She also reported that she believes in planning for a variety of activity types to address these differences. However, the lesson observed was notable for its uniformity, with students being directed what to do and how at each stage of the activity. There was an absence of explicit allowances made for individual learner differences. For P7 and P8, it should be noted, however, that managing individual differences in the language classroom is a paradox with which many teachers grapple.
- P10's declared concern for the affective state of her learners is not apparent in her classroom teaching. Despite her belief in making students feel comfortable and confident to work together in small groups, there was an overall sombre atmosphere with most students working quietly, alone on exercises, despite being directed to work collaboratively. It has been demonstrated that models and demonstrations by the teacher are crucial to achieve this (Chappell, 2014a). Both were absent in this lesson. It may well be that despite her stated beliefs, P10 lacks the classroom management skills to achieve her aims. However, this would need to be explored in follow up research and is conjecture at this stage.

5.2 Content knowledge

Overall, participants had a reasonably well-developed content knowledge base for IELTS; indeed, only one participant, P6, scored incorrectly on the true/false statements about details of the IELTS test. However, the three areas of content knowledge where there were significant differences among the participants are: (1) beliefs about the purpose of IELTS; (2) knowledge about the two modules – General Training and Academic; and (3) attitudes towards IELTS in general and specific aspects of the test in particular.

From the above analyses, it might be inferred that attitudes towards IELTS do not appear to have any particular influence on classroom pedagogy, especially given that several participants stated expressly that they try to keep any negative feelings about the test from their students. However, as Borg's model of teacher cognition shows, attitudes are an integral aspect of teacher cognition, which is in a dialectical relation with teacher practice. It is neither theoretically possible nor desirable to isolate the various psychological constructs of teacher cognition and attempt to determine the influence of each on classroom practice (Borg, 2006; Breen et al, 2001). What is important is to highlight the manifestations of these constructs that are revealed in the data and present them as possibilities for change. Participant 8, for example, holds a negative attitude toward the Writing Tasks, as she states the belief that the topics and text types within each task lack relevance for the target language use domain. This presents an opportunity to develop understandings about the principles behind task design, and the relationship between the concepts of test item authenticity and validity.

A significant implication of this study for classroom practice is that there are key areas where negative attitudes are held and which have the potential to impact classroom practice, despite teachers' outward declarations that they try to keep these negative attitudes in check. These key areas are:

- tasks are not valid or are inauthentic
- the test is not a good design for immigration
- tasks contain Eurocentric texts and language
- marking criteria are unfair – finicky (e.g. spelling in listening)
- no feedback is provided to test-takers
- aspects of the test are unethical, for example students can take the test every week, which is an indication to some teachers of a fiscal rather than educational focus
- interviews in the Speaking Test are intimidating
- the test has a poor, out-dated format as it is paper-based
- assessment of Writing and Speaking can be too subjective
- it is unfair that learning test techniques and tips can have an impact on final band scores
- the General Training module is not suitable for professions
- tasks are simplistic and irrelevant.

The variation in knowledge and beliefs about the purpose of IELTS is also an opportunity to develop understandings among ELICOS teachers of what the purposes of the test are and what domains of academic, professional, vocational, and social life are of relevance for one or both of the modules.

In particular, the data from all three sources indicate some negative attitudes toward, as well as lack of understanding about, the purpose of each module. All participants understand the main purpose of the test to be one of assessing suitability for post-secondary study in an English-medium institution, reflecting the heritage of the test. However, there are varying beliefs about and attitudes toward the purpose of the individual modules. One theme to emerge was the belief that the expansion of the test into new areas, such as immigration and professional accreditation is somehow problematic due to the belief that this as an inappropriate use of the test.

Overall, there is an opportunity to communicate the principles behind the design of the test and how these relate to its variety of applications. Addressing such questions as “How is the test suitable for assessing the language competence of professionals such as nurses?” and “Why is it acceptable to use the same Listening and Speaking Tests in both modules?” would be one strategy to improve the content knowledge of IELTS among teachers.

5.3 Pedagogical content knowledge

The range of qualitative differences in the pedagogical content knowledge bases of the 10 participants is striking. Of course, one expects individual variation in teacher knowledge and the earlier discussion of the nature of pedagogical content knowledge suggests many ways that it, too, can vary by individual. The very fact that individual teachers have their own life histories, experiences with learning and teaching over many years, and their individual attitudes, beliefs and knowledge related to IELTS is reason enough to expect differences. Contextual factors also have an important role. In the present study, the freedom teachers are given to make choices about methodology and content is an important consideration (Bailey, 1996). All 10 teachers are working in institutions that allow a fair degree of freedom in these areas. Added to that is the influence of their idiosyncratic forms of practical pedagogical wisdom (see Section 2.3.3).

However, the scope of the specialist content knowledge and skills required for IELTS preparation courses is narrow. The transformation of that content into knowledge to be learned and taught should be less complex than, for example, what is required for mathematics or history. One might expect there to be more similarities than differences in the way that teachers present IELTS test content and how they make this content accessible for their students.

Despite this, among the participants, eight distinct orientations to teaching IELTS preparation courses became evident after systematic analysis of their written responses to the questionnaire, their elaborations during the interviews, and their actual teaching practices as observed in one of their IELTS classes.

1. Scaffolded, learner-centred IELTS test preparation

2. IELTS test preparation information exchange
3. Co-operative discovery-based learning, General English style
4. Dogme ELT: conversation and language-based IELTS test preparation
5. General English communicative language teaching
6. Authentic, content-based, integrated skills EAP
7. IELTS information sessions
8. IELTS test preparation information exchange

What do these differences mean for the teaching of IELTS test preparation? As mentioned earlier, standardised testing is strongly focused on standardising its practices to ensure reliability of its test scores, which is, understandably, of paramount importance for the stakeholders of high-stakes tests such as IELTS. It is because of this that the phenomenon of washback occurs, defined by Alderson and Wall (1993, p 117) as:

when students and teachers *do things they would not necessarily otherwise do* because of the test (emphasis in original).

It is clear that each of the 10 participants in this study have sufficient autonomy to do what they feel is the best for their students in the IELTS test preparation classroom. As has been demonstrated, this is partly conscious and partly the subconscious influence of the complex knowledge bases that teachers have developed over time. While the scope of this study has not allowed for an investigation of the impact of each approach on students’ test performance, there is undoubtedly a concern for the effectiveness of each approach in supporting student success in the test. Test preparation classes exist so that teachers can teach to the test. Indeed, an IELTS guide for teachers suggests:

The IELTS partners encourage teachers to facilitate English learning with a view to improve students’ general English skills, as well as preparing their students to take the test (British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2013, p. 1).

In light of the data presented in this report, one can question the practicalities of achieving both aims. Indeed, from an ethical perspective, it is suggested that it is incumbent upon ELICOS to put in place a set of standards for test preparation classes. The variation that is evident from just 10 teachers involved in test preparation should be cause for concern, and should stimulate further research, as well as sustained efforts in improving pedagogical practices for test preparation courses. This variation is summarised in Table 1, which includes a description of each participant’s orientation to teaching test preparation courses, the goals that she or he sets, and the relationship between each of the participant’s cognition and classroom practice.

Orientation		Goal of teaching IELTS preparation	Relationship between teacher cognition and practice
Participant 1	Scaffolded, learner-centred IELTS test preparation	Guide and support the learning of students before, during and after interactive classroom tasks to improve their success in the test.	The belief in a meaning-based model of language that is learned through experiential classroom activity supported and guided by the teacher is evident in his classroom practice. Classroom practice involves meaningful language work with authentic materials linked to IELTS test tasks.
Participant 2	IELTS test preparation information exchange	Transmit information to students about effective test-taking techniques and strategies.	The stated belief that the primary role of language is for communication was not evident in her classroom practice, nor did it surface in more in-depth discussion in the interview. Her stated belief in the value of providing information about test format and content is consistent with her classroom practice. Her stated beliefs about the nature of language and learning partially conflict with her classroom practice and what she said in more in-depth interview discussion.
Participant 3	Co-operative discovery-based learning, General English style	Provide opportunities for students to co-operate in small group activities in order to learn and discover from each other.	The strongly stated belief in students collaborating and learning from each other through group work is a significant influence on her IELTS test preparation classroom practice. Her unclear conception of language is apparent in the lack of teaching about language. While she has fairly well-developed knowledge of the test, she does not explicitly transform that knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge. Underlying her classroom practice is a belief that learning will occur with minimal teacher intervention.
Participant 4	Dogme ELT: conversation and language-based IELTS test preparation	Fully engage the students in dialogic inquiry about an IELTS-related theme and capitalise on emerging language learning and teaching opportunities.	His stated belief is that language is a cultural mechanism that enables communication, and classroom learning is best achieved in contexts involving authentic interpersonal interactions. These beliefs are highly consistent with his classroom practice, where he engages the students in simulated IELTS test tasks and elicits discussion about the context-specific uses of language for the task.
Participant 5	Scaffolded, learner-centred IELTS test preparation	Guide and support the learning of students before, during and after interactive classroom tasks to improve their success in the test.	The stated beliefs in language as being functional and the importance of clear communicative goals for classroom language learning are fully consistent with her classroom practice. There is a clear alignment of her knowledge and beliefs about IELTS with her classroom practice.
Participant 6	General English communicative language teaching	Prepare students for success in the test using regular, communicative language teaching strategies usually applied to general English courses.	His practical pedagogical wisdom is stated unclearly, with reference to CLT as all-inclusive rationale for his practice. He re-contextualises the IELTS band score descriptors as descriptors of desired communicative language use. It is likely that his general pedagogic knowledge base is the main influence on his classroom practice, followed by his content knowledge of IELTS. There is an unclear relationship between his practical pedagogical wisdom and classroom practice.
Participant 7	Authentic, content-based, integrated skills EAP	Develop the academic skills required for success in the test through EAP-style instruction that integrates the macro-skills by linking to common or related themes.	Her practical pedagogical wisdom lacks a clearly stated belief about the nature of language, however, she states a belief in the importance of grammar for language learning. She holds a clearly stated belief in the importance of working with individual learner differences. There are contradictions in what she states in the questionnaire and the interview. Her classroom practice is not consistent with these stated beliefs.

Orientation		Goal of teaching IELTS preparation	Relationship between teacher cognition and practice
Participant 8	Scaffolded, learner-centred IELTS test preparation	Guide and support the learning of students before, during and after interactive classroom tasks to improve their success in the test.	The clearly articulated belief in the importance of working with individual learner differences by varying classroom tasks to suit a range of learners is not consistent with her classroom practice. Apart from this inconsistency, there is a good deal of synergy between the beliefs she states, her practical pedagogical wisdom (which foregrounds the importance of oral communication in the classroom), and her classroom practice.
	IELTS information sessions	Prepare students for the test by providing them with information about how to develop their test-taking techniques and strategies.	The practical pedagogical wisdom of P9 does not appear to be an important influence on his classroom practice, mainly because he conceives of the IELTS test preparation course in very narrow terms. The observed lesson provided an exemplar of his pedagogical content knowledge base for IELTS. He delivered the content of the lesson didactically, representing the content as lists of techniques, tips, and rules to be followed in order to be successful in the test. There appeared to be no strategy for how best to represent the content in a way that is accessible for students other than exposition. The methodology is based largely on verbal and written instructions and explanations. It is a highly limited and focused example of a teacher's pedagogical content knowledge for a course in which he defines the goals and outcomes narrowly.
Participant 10	IELTS test preparation information exchange	Transmit information to students about effective test-taking techniques and strategies.	The stated belief in the importance of language as a vehicle for communication and effective language learning being underpinned by affective factors is not evident in her classroom practice. Analysis of all data sources suggests a disconnect between general pedagogical knowledge, practical pedagogical wisdom, and pedagogical content knowledge.

Table 1: Goals for IELTS test preparation courses and the relationship between teacher cognition and practice

As Table 1 indicates, there is a variety of approaches to teaching test preparation courses employed by the 10 teachers, ranging from a teacher-centred 'information session' type of lesson aimed at transmitting information on test-taking techniques from the teacher to the students, to an approach in which students are more self-directed, providing most of the input ('discovery-based' approach, and the 'dogme style' class). In terms of approaches to language and language learning and the resulting methods, we can see that these exam-oriented courses mirror general language teaching approaches e.g. a skills-based approach can be seen in 'content-based, integrated skills EAP' approach; there is a CLT method, and a more 'process-syllabus' kind of approach favouring emerging language and issues in the form of the Dogme style class, to mention a few. However, the 'exam-technique – oriented' method appears to be specific to this kind of teaching context.

The eight approaches show a significant variation even if the differences in class sizes, frequencies and composition are taken into account. The teaching contexts of the above courses vary ranging from students taking a two-hour course on Saturdays to full-time students studying 20 hours a week; thus these teachers need to cater for different 'audiences' e.g. 'walk-ins' (P10) versus students who come from General English classes and thus are used to CLT (P5 or P7).

However, almost all the students involved in the observed classes aim to take the IELTS test and obtain a desired score, so the great variation in teaching methods cannot be put down to this aspect of the students' needs and expectations.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Preparation courses for standardised language tests such as IELTS are an integral, albeit challenging, component of the IELTS experience for many international citizens who aim for a stake in vocational or higher education, professional accreditation, and/or migration-related activity. A Google search for 'IELTS preparation course Australia' returned 290,000 hits on 30 July 2015. Most of the sites listed from the search are directly linked to commercial colleges. Such a high-stakes test has no trouble attracting offers of help to improve a test-taker's chances of achieving their desired result. Indeed, the linguistic construal of these offers is one area for future research, as there is a plethora of educational propositions clothed in the marketing parlance of the internet's educational market place. Notwithstanding this area of interest, the present study has been more concerned with what takes place in classrooms once the course consumer takes on the role of language student and engages with other students and the teacher in the pursuit of a successful test outcome. The key actors in this high-stakes activity are the teachers and the way they orient themselves to teaching the test preparation course. As reported above, the study has found significant variation in these orientations, including teacher beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and knowledge about teaching IELTS preparation courses.

It was apparent from the questionnaire results from the first phase of this study that the majority of ELICOS teachers involved with IELTS have favourable attitudes towards teaching IELTS preparation courses, citing the prospect of teaching a structured course with clearly defined goals, transparent outcomes in the form of test results, and clearly defined roles for the teacher and students. However, basing the analysis of the three data sources on a model of teacher cognition that establishes boundaries between different forms of teacher knowledge has allowed us to tease out an arresting range of profiles of teachers' orientations toward teaching IELTS preparation courses.

While teachers involved with IELTS preparation tend to be well-qualified and experienced, with a relatively comprehensive knowledge of the format of the test and the demands placed on the students, they demonstrate a lack of understanding of the principles of test design, and how test tasks and test items are written edited, and trialled with reliability, validity and authenticity in mind. In a general sense, teachers are applying a folk wisdom to their appraisal of the test, understandably, albeit wrongly, seeking the linear relationship between test item and target language use domain that language teachers so frequently apply to classroom learning tasks and the domain of target language use. Perhaps this is best exemplified in the seemingly confused nature of P1's understanding of the role of the test as being somehow pedagogic in nature, preparing students for academic study, as well as operating as a gatekeeping tool.

This is clearly an area for a concerted effort by the ELT/TESOL community, including teacher educators, English Australia, IELTS Australia and other test providers, and course providers to seek a more informed and critically aware cohort of teachers for IELTS preparation courses.

While there is some consistency in the gaps in content knowledge, it is the pedagogical content knowledge that demonstrates real diversity. Pedagogical content knowledge is a new form of knowledge resulting from the transformation of content knowledge into a form of knowledge teachers see fit for classroom teaching and learning. As Chappell (2014a, p. 35) explains:

[T]his transformation process is influenced by an ideological gap that is opened up during the process – 'there is a space in which ideology can play' (Bernstein, 2000, p. 32). This space represents the site where the teacher's theories of teaching and learning...can influence the new forms of knowledge and the rules for the teaching and learning of that knowledge...The ideological space that Bernstein describes is evident in the pedagogic discourse that is created as the teacher transforms the knowledge from its original location into knowledge for the classroom.

Pedagogic content knowledge explains why teachers differ in the classroom teaching and learning activities they are responsible for setting up and managing. The implications for improving the overall quality of IELTS preparation courses are significant, and point to interventions to influence the ideological gap that helps define a teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

There is a need to set boundaries around IELTS test preparation courses in order to create explicit and transparent goals that all stakeholders have access to, and that define the nature of the course and thus how it differs from other language courses, such as EAP and General English. Teachers require access to information about the test that goes beyond understandings of test format. Teachers need better understandings of test design principles so that they can not only appreciate the purposes and usefulness of test items and test tasks, but can use these understandings to transform the knowledge into pedagogically useful knowledge for students preparing for the test.

Specific areas that this study has identified as crucial for teachers to have a greater understanding of are:

- the ways that IELTS is a 'fair, accurate and relevant' test of a person's language skills (British Council et al, 2013, p. 1)
- what the 'well-established standards' are upon which IELTS is based (British Council et al, 2013, p. 1)
- the test design principles, procedures and rationale for each of the test modules and key differences between them

- the rationale for IELTS consisting of tasks and how these tasks relate to the target language use domains
- the rationale for why tasks are designed to integrate other skills and the impact each of the non-linguistic skills has on the scoring criteria; for example, why spelling is a marking criteria for a Listening Task
- how ‘tasks are ‘integrated’ in terms of the relationship between the input and the cognitive processes they elicit’ (British Council et al, 2013, p. 5)
- in what ways do ‘validation studies help to confirm the match between task input, cognitive processing and task output’ (British Council et al, 2013, p. 5)
- evidence for the claim that IELTS is ‘fair, reliable and valid to all candidates, whatever their nationality, cultural background, gender or specific needs’
- the rationale for including only native-speaker accents in the Listening Tasks.

Further, professional learning and development activities should be aimed at supporting teachers to develop a range of appropriate strategies for presenting IELTS content, for engaging students with the content, and for selecting and transforming content in a manner that makes it accessible for students.

Just as there are methodological principles for different approaches to language teaching, such as task-based teaching, genre-based teaching and the like (see Richards and Rodgers, 2014), the teaching of IELTS preparation requires its own set of principles that will ensure students are engaged in best practices for preparing for the test. Based on the findings of this study, it is safe to say that most of those involved directly or indirectly in an educational role with ELICOS and IELTS have not given serious and systematic consideration to appropriate methodologies for test preparation courses. Arguably, these methodologies should centre on guided and individual practice using practice test forms, and generalised test-taking preparation involving special instruction in test-taking techniques and strategies.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

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Introduction

Dear Participant,

As part of the continuing programme to update and refine its International English Language Testing System (IELTS), a number of studies are undertaken in order to determine the impact of the test.

This current project is an investigation of the impact of IELTS in ELICOS colleges in Australia. The aim of the project is to gain an understanding of English language teachers' knowledge about IELTS, and the relationship this knowledge has with their classroom teaching. Your responses to this questionnaire will be treated in confidence, and only used for the stated purposes of the study.

Here is a link to a short video which gives an overview of the project and of what we hope to achieve:

<http://ieltsresearch.weebly.com/>

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation. We should also be grateful if you would tick the consent option below.

Yours sincerely
Dr. Philip Chappell
Lecturer
Linguistics Department
Faculty of Human Sciences
Macquarie University
North Ryde NSW 2109

CONSENT

Your consent to participate in the Impact Study

I understand that:

- The purpose of the study is to collect and analyse information from those familiar with international

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English language tests;

- My name will not appear in any project publication
- The information I give, but not my name, may be quoted;
- I am free to refuse to participate in the study and may withdraw at any time;
- My completed questionnaire is for the study team only; it will not be shown to anyone not connected with the study

CONSENT options. Please tick one of the options

Yes, I give my consent

No, I do not give consent

Section A: About you

Your full name:

Form of address:

Ms

Mrs

Mr

Dr

Other, please specify

Your age, please:

below 30

31 - 40

41 - 50

51 - 60

61+

Name and location of institution where you work:

Your position there:

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Your qualifications:

Number of years you have been teaching English:

Number of years you have been teaching IELTS:

Have you been trained as an examiner for IELTS or other international proficiency test(s)?

Yes. If yes please explain a little:

No

Have you received any training in how to teach IELTS preparation courses?

Yes. If yes please describe briefly:

No

Section B: About your students

The following questions in Section B relate to the class(es) that you are currently teaching. If you are not currently teaching an IELTS preparation class, please refer to the most recent class you taught.

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What are your IELTS students' country(ies) of origin:

What are your IELTS students' level(s) of education:

secondary up to 16 years secondary 17-19 years degree or equivalent postgraduate unsure

For what reasons are they taking the IELTS test (please list)?

Taking which IELTS modules?

	All students	Most	About half	A few	None
Academic Module	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
General Training module	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Proportion of students who have already taken IELTS at least once before

All students Most About half A few None

Section C: Your knowledge of, attitudes toward and beliefs about IELTS

Do you consider IELTS an appropriate test to assess candidates' future English language performance:

	Yes	No	Not sure
for study at undergraduate level?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
for study at postgraduate level?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| for vocational study? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| in students' professional work? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| for immigration purposes? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Does the IELTS test provide positive motivation for your students?

Yes

No

Unsure

Does the IELTS test cause unhelpful stress for your students

Yes

No

Unsure

Does the IELTS test influence your choice of the content of your IELTS preparation lessons (i.e. what you teach)?

If yes, please note how the test influences your decisions on lesson content

Yes

No

Unsure

Do you think the IELTS test influences your choice of methodology (i.e. the way you teach) for IELTS preparation lessons? For example, you might do more or less group work, or you might spend more time explaining grammar rules, etc.

Yes. If yes, please note here how the IELTS influences the way you teach:

No. If no, please note here why you have the same methodology for IELTS and non-IELTS lessons:

Not sure

Please complete the following statements:

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What I like about teaching IELTS is:

What I dislike about teaching IELTS is:

Apart from actual English language proficiency, what knowledge and/or skills do you think help students achieve a good IELTS grade?

What advice would you give to a colleague who was about to teach an IELTS preparation class for the first time?

Compared with other English language classes you have taught (or currently teach):

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	more successful?	as successful?	less successful?	I haven't taught other English classes
Do you think your IELTS preparation classes are:				
Can you explain why?				
<input type="text"/>				

Please rank the IELTS Test sections in order of difficulty for most of your students (1 = most difficult ... 4 = least difficult)

<input type="text"/>	Reading
<input type="text"/>	Writing
<input type="text"/>	Listening
<input type="text"/>	Speaking

The following questions are of a more general nature and ask you about your knowledge of IELTS.

What do you believe to be the overall purpose of the IELTS test?

What do you understand to be the difference in purpose between the two test formats: IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training?

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Are the following statements about the IELTS test correct?

	Yes	No	Not sure
The IELTS test includes a section testing grammar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the speaking module, candidates have to both ask and answer questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading and writing together carry more than half of the marks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidates have two opportunities to hear the voice recordings in the listening module	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidates have to write at least 150 words for the first task in the writing module	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Candidates often need to refer to the reading texts when they do the writing module	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The reading module has three sections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the listening module, candidates may have to label a diagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section D: About IELTS preparation classes

What is the name of the IELTS preparation class that you teach now, or that you taught most recently?

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Is it part of a specific course (e.g. an EAP course), or is it a standalone course?

Does it specialise in a specific IELTS test? If so, which one?

No, it doesn't

IELTS Academic

IELTS General Training

A combination of both

Other (please explain)

How many students on average attend the IELTS class(es) you teach?

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

21-25

26+

Are the IELTS courses normally taught by one, or more than one teacher? If more than one teacher, please explain how this is coordinated.

What proportion of the time on your IELTS preparation course is normally spent working on the following and how useful do you believe they are for the IELTS test?:

	very useful	quite useful	not very useful	not applicable
Reading:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="text"/>				

What percentage of class time would you spend working on the following:

	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Reading											0
Writing											0
Listening											0
Speaking											0
Vocabulary											86
Grammar											0
Other											0
Total:											86

Which of the following activities take place in your normal IELTS preparation class?

	Yes	No	Not sure
LISTENING (L) :			
(L) Reading questions and predicting what listening texts will be about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(L) Listening to live, recorded or video talks / lectures and taking notes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(L) Listening and taking part in seminar / workshop activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(L) Using information from a lecture or talk in written reports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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(L) Reading questions and guessing the types of answer required	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(L) Practice in recognising previous information repeated in different words	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
READING (R) :			
(R) Analysing text structure and organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Yes	No	Not sure
(R) Interpreting statistics / graphs / diagrams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(R) Reading texts to predict test questions and tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(R) Learning quick and efficient ways of reading texts in English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(R) Reading articles, reports, books in your specialist subject area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(R) Using monolingual dictionaries to complete reading tasks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(R) Reading quickly to get the main idea of a text	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
WRITING (W) :			
(W) Copying out good paragraphs and model answers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Yes	No	Not sure
(W) Describing graph / process / statistical data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Learning how to organise essays	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Practising using			

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words or phrases to organise a written text (e.g. <i>firstly, furthermore, secondly, therefore</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Learning how to write in different styles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Short report writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Planning written answers to test questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Editing written work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Yes	No	Not sure
(W) Writing parts of test answers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(W) Writing long essays, reports (i.e. over 1000 words)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SPEAKING (S) :			
(S) Practising making a point and providing supporting examples	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(S) Planning and delivering oral presentations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(S) Group discussions / debates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(S) Practising using filler words to cover gaps in speech (e.g. <i>well ... you see ...</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
(S) Practising using words or phrases to organise a speech (e.g. <i>firstly furthermore, secondly, I have two points ...</i>)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section D (cont'd)

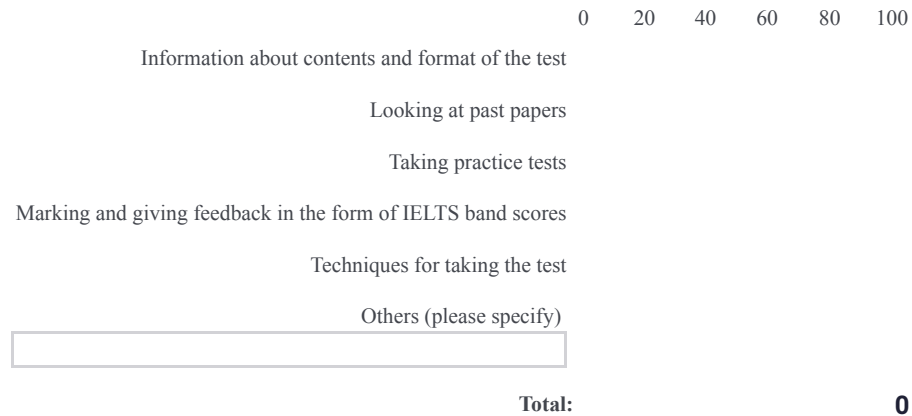
<https://mqedu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/Ajax.php?action=GetSurveyPrintPreview&T=1GzKd2dH9M12SthuiZX1c8>

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Qualtrics Survey Software

30/07/2015 2:47 pm

How much, if any, of the following kinds of specific exam practice do you give on your preparation course (as approximate percentages (%) of the course:



Do you use (a) textbook(s) on your IELTS preparation course?

If so, what is / are the title(s)?

(approximately if you cannot remember exactly)

If you do / did use (a) textbook(s), please give your opinions of the good and not so good points.

(a) the **GOOD POINTS:**

If you do / did use (a) textbook(s), please give your opinions of

(b) the **NOT SO GOOD POINTS:**

Qualtrics Survey Software

30/07/2015 2:47 pm

What other teaching materials do you use on your IELTS preparation course(s) and why?

What does a good / successful student do on the IELTS preparation course that an unsuccessful one does not?

If an IELTS score had *not* been a requirement would you have prepared your students for their future studies abroad in the same way?

Yes

No

Would your IELTS preparation course be a good way to learn English for someone going to university but who is not going to take IELTS? Why? / Why not?

Would the IELTS preparation course be useful for someone who is not going to university? Why? / Why not?

Please note here anything else you wish to say about your IELTS preparation course:

<https://mqedu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/Ajax.php?action=GetSurveyPrintPreview&T=1GzKd2dH9M12SthuiZX1c8>

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Qualtrics Survey Software

30/07/2015 2:47 pm

Thank you for completing the survey.

After we collate the results we are keen to conduct interviews and classroom observations.

If you are interested in participating in the second phase of this project, could you **please indicate below, and also provide your email address in the space provided. We're also asking for your name again just to be sure we have your correct details.**

All participants of Phase Two (Interview and Observation) will be entered into a draw to win an **\$800 gift voucher.**

The Research Project Website is <http://ieltsresearch.weebly.com>

Yes, I would be willing to participate in an interview and classroom observation.

My Name and Email address is:

No, thank you

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APPENDIX 2: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. To begin with, a general question. When we talk about the word “language”, what comes to mind?
2. How do you think students best learn a language?
3. Based on (what you think about language and language learning), what do you do as a teacher to support your students to learn English?
4. Thinking about testing in education in general, what is your experience as a student with tests, exams, assignments, etc?
5. Has this experience overall been more positive or more negative for you? Can you give me some examples?
6. Do you think your experience with being tested influences the way you teach IELTS courses?
7. How did you first learn about IELTS tests as a teacher? probe: informal talk in staff room, reading, workshops, knowing people who have taken the test, conferences, etc)
8. How do you keep up to date with information about the test these days?
9. Have you done any formal training to teach IELTS? If yes, how has this influenced the way you approach teaching IELTS courses? If no, is there any kind of training that you would like to have to help you teach IELTS courses?
10. Have you done any formal training as an IELTS examiner? If yes, how has this influenced the way you approach teaching IELTS courses? (Note: some may be reluctant to talk about this. Remind them it is confidential and their names will not be reported)
11. What is your understanding of the overall purpose of the IELTS test in Australian society?
12. What do you think is the overall reasoning behind the IELTS test? probe: approach to testing (fairness, objectivity, accuracy of results, standardised, relevant)
13. What is your overall attitude towards the IELTS test?
14. How does IELTS fit in with your approach to language teaching? probe: how does it relate to other courses you teach e.g. General English, EAP
15. What do you do differently as a teacher in IELTS classes that you don’t do in other courses you teach? probe: communicative language teaching, knowledge about language
16. Is IELTS very different to other courses you teach? How/Why?
17. What is your main role as the teacher in your IELTS classroom?
18. How is that different to other courses you teach?
19. What is your students’ main role in your IELTS class?
20. What do you expect of them? How is that different to other English courses you teach?
21. Is there anything else you’d like to say about teaching IELTS or the IELTS test in general?

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE CODE SYSTEM

Students' roles	
	Maintain positive attitude/control stress
	Be responsible for their own learning
	Practice using language outside class
	Do out of class study
Teachers' roles	
	Advice to other teachers
	Know the test band descriptors/how the test is marked
	Locate/Use good/useful materials
	Help students manage stress
	Teach/Model test taking tasks and techniques
	Give students test practice
	Be able to explain the test simply
	Develop students' English proficiency
	Know the test day logistics
	Be familiar with the test structure
RED	
General statements	
	Specific tasks similar/different
	Unclear
	Testing different preparation levels
	Critical thinking
	Both test ability to cope in everyday lives
Difference between Modules	
	Academic
	Focused on entering/ coping in Higher Ed contexts
	Tests academic language
	Tests specific academic language skills
	Focused on entering/ coping in professional contexts
	General Training
	Purpose: to test for migration purposes
	For entry to secondary school or vocational college
	Focused on entering/ coping in the workplace
	For tertiary studies requiring lower Eng prof
	Focused on coping in an English speaking country
	Tests everyday/communicative language skills
	Not focused on academic language
Reasons for taking test	
	To access further study
	To assess their English
	To improve English in general
	To access employment/Professional reasons
	Immigration
Likes and dislikes about teaching IELTS	
	IELTS classes are more successful than other classes
	Teacher's perceived experience and ability
	Student's motivation and hard work
	The test result is evidence
	IELTS classes are less successful than other classes
	Likes

	Can teach the class in new and different ways/new materials
	More cognitively challenging for students
	Motivates/increases confidence/provides goals for students
	Provides clear curriculum for teachers/Easy to teach(es, etc)
	Rewarding: Seeing students achieve success
	Teacher learns new things from the content
	Dislikes
	Teaching to the test
	Specific tasks
	Stressful/difficult for teacher
	Students' unrealistic expectations
	Students' language levels too low
	Validity of test for students
	Students' focus on test scores
	Monotonous/Repetitive
	Frustrating/demotivating/stressful for students
	Overall purpose of test & attitudes
	Negative attitude
	Affective impact on students
	Commercial
	Role of test
	Format of test
	Positive attitude
	Good for employers/universities
	Useful for university study
	Useful for work
	Generally good
	Opportunity
	Commercial reasons
	Gatekeeping
	Measure proficiency
	IELTS examiner training
	Speaking examiner
	Writing examiner
	Marker
	Other exams e.g Cambridge
	Trainer of examiners