Learningguild Letter

2.2012

Dear members and friends of Learningguild,

This time a letter comes from both John and Margaret, since we'd both like to describe and express gratitude for our month in China in October-November.

John. Staying in hotels in each place, we began with a week in Beijing from October 27th, and had three to five nights in each of Shanghai, Chengdu, Chongqing, Wuhan and Hong Kong in that order, as well as three on a ship down the Yangtze from Chongqing to Yichang, whence we took a bus to Wuhan. We travelled on a medium-fast train (up to about 190 kmh) from Chengdu to Chongqing, and otherwise by air. It was a delight and a help that our second son Stephen was with us for ten days, in Chongqing, on the ship and the bus, and in Wuhan and nearby Zaoshi: he remembered and used some of the Chinese he had learnt during doctoral studies some twenty years ago at the London School of Economics.

Apart from a general interest in China, we had one decisive reason for going to China and an auxiliary one I'll give in beginning the third part of this letter. Margaret was born in Wuhan Union Hospital in 1937: her father Collin Robjohns, a South Australian doctor, had worked there and at Zaoshi about 150 km to the north-west, and her mother Dorothy had taught English. The family lived in Zaoshi for the last seven months of Collin's work there, before their movements were curtailed by the occupying Japanese troops after Pearl Harbour. We had with us Collin's autobiography. Stephen draws on it in his article on pp. 4 and 5 in writing about his grandparents, and describes our visit to Zaoshi; he took the photographs that are on p.6.

Margaret. Visiting China is not something to be taken lightly and requires that tourists be fit. Whether or not you have access to a car, there is a lot of walking to be done. For example, the Olympic Stadium, the "Bird's Nest", in Beijing has an enormous forecourt, about 800 metres long.

We noted the frequency of trees in the city and were told there had been many storms which had blown away sandy topsoil. To preserve it trees were planted along roadsides. These and boxes of flowers in median strips do much to soften the views of busy streets amid thirty-storey buildings.

October-November was for us a good time to be in China, outside the main tourist months but not too cold. We were fortunate in leaving Beijing before snow set in. Because we knew no one there, we had paid for a five-day tour, and found that we were the only takers. Our driver, whose name was Ocean, given to him, he assured us, by his mother, spoke English quite well, and took us to several of the usual tourist sites, including Tiananmen Square, which is certainly large and was crowded. There were numerous Chinese groups identified by caps in a particular bright colour. The Forbidden City is a series of houses in a courtyard similar to those in Cambodia. This was where the Emperor's concubines lived. We were told of the terrible custom that after he died his concubines were killed.

I had been told by friends who had already been to Shanghai that there was no point in looking for places where I had lived for the last three years of the Second World War, as most of the buildings of that time had been knocked down. We visited a beautiful Ming Dynasty garden with a maidenhair tree a hundred years old, very gnarled but still looking much alive. We walked along part of the Bund and some of Nanjing Road, and into the French Concession, whose character remains apparent in the style of the houses.

Our trip was greatly enriched by our friend Guang-chi Jiang here in Melbourne. Hearing of

our proposed trip, he was not only pleased but also gave us a lot of assistance. Under his guidance, we planned our trip and made bookings with an agent he had recommended. Through relatives in Chongqing and a friend in Chengdu he ensured that we were given plentiful hospitality. I remember his lamenting that he did not know anyone in Beijing or Shanghai. He kept a close watch on our stay in Chongqing through his relatives, orchestrating a meal of many courses that we had with several of them in an apartment belonging to a niece. On that occasion we were given a beautiful piece of embroidery in a carved stand, now on our piano. On all the streets we would walk past buildings of many storeys. What we would call apartments Jiang's family call houses: they are the normal form of accommodation in Chinese cities.

Our voyage down the Yangtze was well organized and we had great views of the gorges and high rocky cliffs. At designated spots, we could get off the ship and go for walks, usually up hills.

What will stay most in my mind is that we were able to track two places where I had lived seventy years before. Stephen describes our visit to Zaoshi. Wuhan Union Hospital (the name 'Union' was there from the beginning because the London Missionary Society had combined with the Methodists to establish it in 1866) has grown immensely and, I was told, is known world-wide. To my surprise two senior doctors gave us a sumptuous meal and presented to me a beautiful vase and a big book about the hospital. I did not feel I deserved all this, but I think that it was due to the respect still held in such hospitals for the missionary societies' work in which my father had joined. Other missionary children have had similar welcomes. It is recognized that if the societies had not established and maintained hospitals China would not have had access to Western medicine. Some missionaries continued to work in China from the end of the war until 1949. I remember one visiting us in Adelaide on her way back to England. Asked about what was said now, with the establishment of a Communist government, to be an egalitarian society, she said "Some are more equal than others."

Stephen writes of the great help given by his friend Chen Rong by her translations of information about us. She also gave John and me bountiful hospitality in the last stage of our travels, in Hong Kong. She walked with us upwards and downwards amid the levels of both the botanical garden and the aviary. We took the famous tram to the Peak, from which there are marvellous views. As to Jiang, so also to Rong we are very grateful.

John. The auxiliary reason for our visit to China was my desire to have contact with Chinese universities and make Learningguild known there, and in particular my booklet *SSC* (*Sentences to Study and Change*). In Chengdu, at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Jiang's friend Jianli had arranged and well advertised my evening lecture on the 7th of November, on how best to study English. (Some of its content was included in my letter in the earlier issue for 2012.) Over 100 students came, some standing at the back. There was plenty of interest and a willingness to ask questions. Jianli video-recorded most of the hour's lecture and some of the question-and-answer session of the following hour, and that recording can be borrowed. Not long after we returned, Allyson, one of the students present, took up my invitation to email me and enquired what importance spelling and pronunciation had for those preparing for the (American) GRE test. My reply was in the first of what I called "Letters to Students 2012" (see the Supplement on pp. 16-19). Jianli suggested while we there that a "mirror" version of some of our website could be set up for students at the university if the original was not readily accessible.

Max Stephens, one of our members, had introduced to me Kechiang, an educationist spending a year at the University of Melbourne, who is on the staff of the university called Southwest at Beibei, about 30km from Chongqing. On his advice I telephoned Professor Wen Xu, Dean of the College of International Studies and Professor of English and Linguistics there. I went by taxi on the morning of November 13th. Professor Wen came to meet me and soon introduced Associate Professor Xiao Kairong, who had spent half a year in Manchester in 2010 working on matters of translation. I gave a talk, similar to my Chengdu lecture, to Kairong's class that morning: there were some questions and again obvious interest. I was his guest at an excellent lunch, with lively conversation. Afterwards a tour of the university (which had three athletic tracks) revealed it to be on a widespread campus with plenty of trees and grass and hills. There are fifty thousand students resident, as they are required to be, on the campus, and a similar number of external students! To my sur-

prise I was paid a fee and provided with a university driver for the return to Chongqing. Correspondence has followed, and I am very glad to think of these two academics as friends, now and through future years, who value our cooperation and Learningguild materials.

(How international education can now be. At a philosophy conference in Wollongong, NSW, in July 2012, I was asked for ongoing guidance in the study of English grammar by a Kenyan doctoral student at Bristol in the west of England! How important to look for the best materials one can find, wherever they originate, ones that will help students to learn and explore for themselves.)

It seemed to me evident that there was considerable interest in and openness to the world outside China. It is so important that in countries such as Australia there should be a readiness to maintain, share and explain some of the best of our Western values in education and life, so that Chinese people do not suppose, as might be suggested by the widespread advertisements in Chengdu for fashionable Western clothes, that such luxuries in the view of Westerners generally constitute "the good life". They are of very small importance in the best traditions of the West, and it is corrupting to give them more.

One youngish Australian business man told me before our journey began that I would find that plenty of people spoke English. That was not our experience, particularly in hotels, where conversation with staff seldom got much beyond such standard remarks as "You're welcome." (Better than "No worries"!) An English-language common room would be helpful in a hotel, with newspapers such as the *Guardian Weekly*; locality maps with English would be appreciated too.

How could hotel staff best learn English? As mentioned in our last issue, there is a Chinese edition of Raymond Murphy's *Essential English in Use*, and that, along with a dictionary that provides many illustrative sentences and a booklet-and-CD for pronunciation such as my *Sounds, Words, Sentences* would make a good start. As in all learning, there is no substitute for initial wide-ranging guidance on approach and methods (perhaps the main task of every teacher, but often neglected) and eager persistent work by the student, with regular revision and many exercises. The aim in hotels should be to have at least one staff member at an advanced level in English.

Of course there needs to be wider learning of Mandarin in Australia, but we must be realistic. To learn both pinyin (the system in which romanized spelling is employed for non-native speakers) and hundreds of characters for words and word-parts is no light task and requires great persistence in setting aside time and in using odd times. In spite of its title (few of us can in a month do little but Chinese), Berlitz's *Mandarin Chinese in 30 days* seems with its CDs to be a good guide; so also *Collins Easy Learning Chinese Characters*.

I was very glad to have a meal in Hong Kong with Laurance Splitter, a Victorian Rhodes Scholar whom I first met because I happened to be on the selection committee. He is now Director of General Education at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Like many another tertiary teacher, he wants to find and offer effective ways of inviting and encouraging students to broaden their interests and develop their intellects. For many years he has been one of the pioneers of programs of philosophy within primary and secondary schools. My own preference is for much greater attention than now commonly occurs, for all students at both stages of education, to expansion and accurate use of vocabulary, and in secondary education for the "Clear Thinking" type of critical activity that was required of all senior students in Victoria for forty years until 1983. The *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric are an indispensable foundation for properly tertiary education (see *L'g L* 1.2008), and I doubt whether philosophy can be well maintained without them as a foundation. But eager and serious curiosity is important everywhere in education, and Laurance's work has done much to promote it.

Much of his educational thinking is distilled in a paper available on the net. It is "Beyond Citizenship Education: Some Conceptual and Practical Concerns", and can be found on the web by Googling "Laurance Splitter Hong Kong"; the word 'Education' has been omitted from the title. (See also his "Profile Details".) Laurance wisely warns against an undue emphasis on citizenship in moral education and in conceiving of one's own identity, and endorses Amartya Sen's phrase "the Fallacy of Singular Affiliation".

Travel can help to take us beyond such oversimplifications, and enrich our experience and our minds.

Yours in Learningguild,

John and Margaret Howes

Grandparents, and a visit to Zaoshi

STEPHEN HOWES, *John and Margaret's second son, who joined them for part of their travels in China, is a Professor of Economics at the Australian National University, and especially concerned with international development aid and climate change policy. He is a member of Learningguild and looks after changes to our website.*

I was always somewhat in awe of my mother's father, Dr Collin Robjohns. At times forbidding and distant, he could also open up with fascinating accounts of his life, and wise words of counsel. He took a real interest in his grandchildren. When I began to study development and international relations, he took me to meet Sir Walter Crocker, who had been a distinguished Australian diplomat. Crocker wrote the foreword to the book *My Several Lives: China, geriatrics and gardens. The story of a South Australian doctor*. My grandfather tells of studying medicine at Adelaide and tropical medicine at London, and then of setting off for China in 1935 at the age of 26, accompanied by his wife Dorothy, to work as a London Missionary Society doctor.

After three months in a country hospital and ten of intensive language training, he worked at the Union Hospital, Hankow (one of the three adjoining cities composing Wuhan), and then in a rural clinic in the small town of Zaoshi (or Tsaoshih, as it was then called in English), about 120 km from Wuhan. My mother was born in Union Hospital in February 1937.

For most of the family's time in China, Japan and China were at war. Before Japan's invasion, there was also the Communist uprising to contend with. The part of China where my grandfather worked was wild, violent, and unpredictable. He spent much time negotiating with various authorities, trying to keep his clinic open. There were great floods of refugees, and at times the small hospital he ran became the centre of a refugee camp. His living conditions must have been very basic, his work difficult, his efforts heroic. It had seemed best for his wife and their daughter to be in Adelaide from March 1938, and he was permitted by the LMS to join them and be in Australia for a year's furlough in 1940. He and his wife made the bold decision to return to China, and did so with their daughter early in 1941. In August the second daughter, Gwen, was born, also at Union Hospital, and then, for the first time, the family lived in Zaoshi, but it was to be only for about seven months, in the middle of which was a world-changing event.

In December, Japan bombed Pearl Harbour, putting itself at war with the USA and other countries, including Australia. My grandfather and his family were first under house arrest at the mission hospital in Hankow, then, in Shanghai, at first refugees in the Columbia Country Club and later interned in a civilian camp. There, weakened by a shortage of food before Red Cross parcels began to arrive, my grandmother died in March 1944. The war ended in August 1945, and, two days before Christmas, my grandfather and their two daughters arrived back in Adelaide.

He was still only 37, and went on, as he puts it, to live two more lives, though only after thirteen years of what he was unable to regard as his vocation, general practice in Adelaide. The first was as a pioneering geriatrician in Ballarat and in Adelaide, and the other, after he retired and still in Adelaide, as a gardener and the founder of Australia's first association of friends of a botanical garden. Such groups have now become ubiquitous around Australia. He died, aged 82, in 1990.

When my parents decided last year that they would go to China (my mother for the first time since 1945, and my father for the first time in his life), it was too good an opportunity to resist, and I asked if I might join them. We agreed that I would meet them in the boomtown of Chongqing in the south-west. From there, we would go by ship down the Yangtze to the Three Gorges Dam, and Yichang, and take a bus to Wuhan. We planned to visit what is now called Wuhan Union Hospital, and make our way to Zaoshi. I would then fly back to Australia, leaving my parents to have a few days in Hong Kong before they returned home.

All in all, it was a great trip, and a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I want to tell the story of our visit to Zaoshi, which for me was the highlight. We arrived in Wuhan late on a Friday night, after a long

and somewhat anxious journey on two buses. We spent Saturday recovering and exploring the city, hired a car and a driver to get to Zaoshi, and set out early Sunday morning.

When we arrived after a couple of hours of driving, sometimes in fog, we made our way to the town's hospital. At that stage, lack of sufficient Chinese would have been an insurmountable barrier, had not my good and very generous friend Chen Rong (we met when we were both graduate students at the London School of Economics) written out in Chinese a few sentences about why we had come to Zaoshi. My mother showed them to one of the doctors, and he got into the car. We drove a little way to a residential area next to a school. There was the house my grandfather and his family had lived in seventy years before.

The house and the whole residential compound of which it was part matched the descriptions in his book perfectly. In particular, we could observe the verandah (pictured) from which my grandfather "watched the flood of refugees on the road to the west" after the Japanese occupation (p.33). We could also observe the extra room he had built onto one of the existing houses, to be ready for the arrival of the family.

Remarkably, we had found their house, but there seemed to be no sign of the hospital he ran. But then someone took us to the school across the road. On the other side of the road from the residential complex we had just visited was a building which looked colonial and well-kept. Again language was a barrier, but fortunately, even though it was a Sunday, school was on (it was a boarding school, and apparently classes ran every day between holidays) and the English teachers were gathered to meet us.

Though we had arrived entirely unannounced, the school authorities took us out for an excellent lunch, and the teachers were keen to use their English. They took us back to the school after lunch (the photograph shows the entire group, and my parents), and we went through the clinic-like building again (also photographed). They explained to us that indeed this building used to be a hospital. It was now the school's administration block. It was in very good condition, and little imagination was required to picture it as a small hospital, or indeed as the centre of a refugee camp.

I was amazed that so much had survived from my grandfather's time there, especially given the enormous scale of construction that has gone on in China. Of course, a lot hasn't survived. At the school someone pointed out some new buildings, and said that they were built on a graveyard. I remembered the passage in my grandfather's book: "The immediate land was covered with grassy mounds which were in fact graves, the burying place of many generations. The standing mission pun was that Tsaoshi faced a grave situation" (p.28).

The trip to China had many highlights besides our day in Zaoshi. One was the generosity of the family in Chongqing of Guang-chi Jiang, often called their seventh uncle, who studied English with my father twenty years ago, still lives in Melbourne and is a member of Learningguild. The trip down the Yangtze was another, the visit to the Wuhan Union Hospital which my mother relates a third.

The time in Wuhan and Zaoshi was a fascinating reconnection with my grandfather. It was also an opportunity to honour two dedicated and brave humanitarians from another era. I hadn't realized until the visit, re-reading my grandfather's book and learning more about Japanese atrocities in China, just what a dangerous time this was, or how perilous my grandfather's existence must have been. His work must have had a lot in common with that of today's *Medécins sans Frontières* (Doctors without Borders) in the Democratic Republic of Congo or the Medical Aviation Fellowship in PNG. My grandmother also showed extreme dedication by going with him back to China.

The trip to Zaoshi was also an opportunity to reflect on how far China has come from the chaos, violence and disease of the 1930s. That national progress makes one optimistic about its future.

Finally, stepping outside the big cities and visiting a town like Zaoshi was also a reminder that many in China enjoy a very modest standard of living, well below what we consider acceptable.

I would like to thank my good friend Chen Rong, without whose remote help from Hong Kong we would never have found my grandfather's home and clinic, or connected with Wuhan Union Hospital.

My grandparents' house with the verandah.

My parents with the teachers and the doctor.

My grandfather's hospital, now the school's administration block.

Two meanings of ‘logical’

JOHN DRENNAN *completed an honours degree in Philosophy and History at Melbourne in 1956, and has since given much thought to the relation between these and other disciplinary areas, including, especially, theology − in which,* inter alia*, he graduated from London University in 1971.*

I was asked some time ago to write something on the role of reason or logic in theology, or in the study of the truth and/or value of spirituality and religion. That is a very controversial area, and largely beyond my present scope. Here I want simply to point out what seems to me a fundamental confusion between two meanings of the adjective ‘logical’, and also of related adjectives such as ‘rational’, a confusion which has, I think, bedevilled much discourse in that area, both present-day and dating back at least to the period of Neoplatonism, especially – though not exclusively – in popular, as distinct from “academic”, examples of such discourse.

The first meaning might be called **referential**. In this sense the word simply names or refers to a particular area of mental activity (or process or faculty – call it what you will). Thus ‘logic’ and ‘logical’ refer to deduction (inferring, putting two and two together, and such like) and to induction, irrespective of whether or not the process is well or appropriately carried out. Thus the noun or the adjective, used in this way, demarcates the relevant area from other areas of mental activity such as sensation, perception, imagination, emotion, conation and so on.

The second meaning might be called **evaluative**, and this is perhaps the more common one for the words ‘logical’ and ‘rational’. When we say that a particular argument is logical, we don’t normally mean that it consists solely of logic (in the first sense of the word), but rather that it deals with its subject-matter in an appropriate or correct manner. So too with ‘rational’.

This distinction can be seen in the two senses of ‘logical’ in the sentence ‘Brown’s historical writings are more logical than his logical writings.’ The imagined author, let us say, wrote books or articles on history – the word ‘historical’ is used in a referential way – and such writings exude a very logical character, logical in the evaluative sense: his conclusions are carefully based on his sources, and he refrains from over-generalizing or making wild assertions not warranted by these sources. But his **logical** writings – using the word referentially – are quite a different kettle of fish. They contain more than a few inconsistencies, unwarranted generalizations, non-sequiturs and the like. And thus they might be said to be not very **logical** – in the evaluative sense of the word.

The possibility of semantic confusion is exacerbated by a variation of the first kind of definition, in which an entity is said to belong to a particular class only if it successfully complies with certain evaluative criteria. For example, art might be defined in such a way that a drawing or painting, though intended by its maker to be a piece of art, should only be classified as art if it complies with certain aesthetic criteria (whether specifically defined or not); and a sequential account of human doings should only be classified as history if it complies with certain criteria for history, otherwise being rejected as (mere) chronicle, for example. Of course the relevant criteria for acceptance, necessarily at least somewhat subjective, vary considerably among different persons using such terms.

For the sake of truth and validity, then, it is essential to bear in mind the kinds of definition I have tried to delineate above. Confusing them, or surreptitiously changing from one meaning to another, can have results that are disastrous for attempts at cogent argument.

Unless one is an ultra-rationalist, holding that everything that exists or happens does so ultimately through logical necessity, and/or that true knowledge rests solely on pure reason, one has to take into account both reason and other mental processes. It is not a matter of choosing one or the other – as if one could have a logical or rational “approach” **or** a subjective “approach” – or of somehow “mixing” reason and other mental processes in some sort of “balanced” manner. It is a matter, rather, of finding how each is appropriate or relevant to that about which one is seeking knowledge or understanding.

Some partial analogies may be useful. Reason may, I think, in some respects be likened to oil in a piece of machinery. Oil, or some other lubricant, is quite essential if you want the machine to work. Without it, the machine will seize up and not function. But the necessity of the lubricant does not mean that you should just throw away the cogwheels, levers, etc. which make up the machine, and just keep the oil. That would obviously be absurd. Another parallel might be drawn between reason and commercial law. Some form of the latter is essential for the effective and fair functioning of the economy. But by itself, i.e. without production, distribution and exchange, and whatever else makes up the realm of the economy, commercial law is clearly of no use or relevance.

More argumentation would be required to demonstrate some of the assertions I have made in the last three paragraphs. That is beyond the scope of this article. My point is that, on some such assumptions as those above, rationality or logicality in an evaluative sense of the word is different from rationality or logicality when the word is used referentially.

I am not suggesting that logic has merely a sort of coordinating or organizing or policing sort of function, as the oil-in-machinery analogy might appear to suggest, though that seems to be one of its main functions. Perception, for example, and much of its hyperordinate category called cognition, appear to involve both sensation and logic. Rather, each of the two analogies points to one aspect of logic and reason. What is essential, in any consideration of theological or other discourse, is to bear in mind the nature or character of the concepts one is using, including different concepts represented by the same word, such as 'faith', and how they are related. One should avoid the assumption, for example, that all such concepts are in some way on a par, similar or comparable ingredients, or that one or some are somehow superior to others.

From graduation to retirement

RON RYE *has written this sequel to his article "From infancy in the 1920s to graduation", which appeared in our previous issue.*

As I was approaching my final engineering exams in 1944, a radio engineer in the Commonwealth Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) decided to resign and study medicine, leaving a very rare vacancy. He decided that he would himself seek a successor rather than leave it to the Department to advertise, with many subsequent interviews. How much depends on chance meetings! He visited our Engineering building at the University of Melbourne, apparently without any prior arrangement, at a time when I happened to be the only student in the electrical laboratory. Without further ado, he asked me if I would like to fill the vacant position. I was subsequently interviewed and accepted, despite my obvious lack of practical experience and meagre knowledge of up-to-date electronics. Had the job been advertised, it is likely that a more experienced person would have been chosen, as demobilizing of experienced air force radio engineers was soon to commence.

Around Australia there were already radio stations about every 500 km, linked by short-wave radio, and on the eastern routes a radio beam guidance system, of German design. (The same system was used as a bombing guide by the Germans across Britain, until jammed out by British engineers.) These stations were rudimentary, but sufficient for the limited civil air traffic at that time.

I started work in a cosy little office in Melbourne. The old building, with its hydraulic lifts, has been demolished. There was one other base grade engineer, a senior engineer and about six technicians, who had been radio operators and done their own repairs for most technical faults occurring on their equipment. One of them had received a medal for sticking to his post during the initial bombing of Darwin.

At Essendon airport there was a maintenance workshop with two very skilled technicians, who

travelled to country stations for jobs requiring extra resources. Each capital city airport had a similarly staffed workshop. My "equipment" consisted of a table, chair and telephone, a radiator under the table, and a mat to put my feet on. Our central office was responsible for forward planning for the predicted growth in air traffic as the end of the war approached, and for the solving of engineering problems too difficult for the above field staff. Given the experience of my colleagues, I felt inferior, but was treated courteously, and given relatively simple initial jobs. It was obvious that this couldn't last, and I was soon assigned to Essendon workshop, to obtain some practical experience under the guidance of the technicians there. Amateur radio books provided most of the missing parts of radio knowledge, based also on the fundamental principles learnt in my university course.

My first real job was to design and make a radio beam transmitter for Darwin, as the German equipment imported just before the war was obviously no longer available. Parts were hard to obtain, and much improvising was necessary, but it worked, although not as reliably as the beautifully made German units. I learnt to swim, as they say, by being thrown into the deep end. From then on I gradually gained experience and confidence, and was fortunate to travel throughout Australia and Papua/New Guinea for planning and maintenance. In 1965, I was sent to visit factories in Europe, the USA and Japan, travelling first class for nine weeks, assessing tenders received for some high-power radio transmitters not made in Australia. First-class air fares were provided to all DCA employees, I think under a deal made with the airlines, perhaps reducing their airport usage fees. This practice was discontinued in 1972, when costing at DCA became more rigorous.

During my time with DCA, from 1945 to 1984, there was continual growth in air traffic, and thus a continual demand for improved facilities for communication and navigation. Technology was steadily improving, so there was never a shortage of challenging technical problems. In 1945 our radio stations were linked by short-wave radio, in frequency just above the standard AM broadcast band. Morse code was used, which was slow and tied up an operator at each end of the link. Land lines were unreliable and rare. Short-wave radio relies on reflections from layers of naturally electrically charged gas some 100 to 500 km above the earth. The signal varies continually in strength, requiring regular changes in frequency to meet changing conditions. It provided a mantle of safety for aircraft (and the Flying Doctor), and was also used by "the School of the Air" and many inland workers doing mineral prospecting etc. It is still used, but now as a relatively cheap alternative to the preferred satellites, which became practicable in the early 1970s.

I was involved in adapting machine telegraph equipment to work unattended over short-wave radio, requiring automatic error-correcting equipment and directional antenna systems. Air/ground short wave was also improved by better antennas, and provision of receiving stations at least 10 km from inhabited areas, to escape man-made electrical noise, from motors, welders etc. Transistors steadily replaced glass-enclosed valves from about 1960 to 1980, giving much improved reliability and versatility. Our present technology, as used e.g. in mobile phones, results from the continual shrinking of micro-circuits (still based on a tiny built-in computer) and the ability of transistors to work up to wavelengths near one centimetre. Landlines and under-ocean cables now carry thousands of channels, using glass fibre.

I was very fortunate to be involved in the communications revolution I have described. I retired from DCA in 1984, and did consulting jobs on radio for Defence and Flying Doctor organisations in 1989 and 1994. I still keep an interest in technology, but only as secondary to other pursuits.

I conclude with two stories of technical problems that had to be solved, and, not requiring technical knowledge, are of some general interest. I have called them "The Wonthaggi Mystery" and "The ghost radio broadcast".

Since the 1950s there has been a "radio homer beacon" in the paddocks near Wonthaggi, some 150 km south-east of Melbourne. It is simpler than the "beam" equipment described earlier, and gives only a radio compass indication in an aircraft passing near it of the bearing towards Wonthaggi, an indication needed when the aircraft is passing overhead in cloud or at night. After installation, on most mornings it used wrongly to change over to standby equipment, which meant a technician had to travel to Wonthaggi to investigate. When he got there, he found nothing wrong with either main or standby equipment: it continued to operate proper-

ly all day, and until the next morning, when the whole phenomenon occurred again. So it was obvious that the tech would have to stay in Wonthaggi overnight, and get to the beacon site before dawn next morning. As dawn approached, he heard a loud twittering and squawking outside − the antenna's horizontal wires were covered with hundreds of starlings! The effect was to detune the antenna, and the radio power output fell to a very low value, causing the main equipment to switch automatically to standby equipment, which was locked on. After a while the birds, having had their morning get-together, all flew away, and the radio power of the standby unit returned to full strength.

The "ghost story" concerns aircraft coming in to land on the east/west runway at Essendon, with radio tuned in to the control tower frequency. As they passed houses near the Eastern boundary, they heard broadcast from a station, usually but not always 3AW. This had to be located and, by a street search with direction-finding equipment, was found to be from a particular house. The technicians explained their mission to the occupier, and were shown an innocent-looking radio receiver in the living room. In the 1950s radio broadcast receivers were still scarce and expensive, and many, like this one, were homemade. The maker was not familiar with the care needed in arranging the internal wiring, which can cause the final output valve to "feed back", with a noise like the howl you get when you place a public address microphone in front of the linked loudspeaker, but in this case the feedback occurred at a radio rather than an audio frequency, and by chance on that of the Essendon control tower. Whatever broadcast station was tuned to by the owner (usually 3AW) was impressed on the Essendon tower radio "carrier", and thus picked up by the aircraft when passing overhead. I was not involved in the finish to the story, but I think that a new receiver was given to the embarrassed owner. It was Departmental policy to pay for interference when due to the innocent action of an individual.

Some are fortunate in finding a partner who proves to be compatible over the long term. I was not. My first marriage worked successfully for twenty years, producing four healthy children (who live well-adjusted and successful lives). However, we found we were drifting apart through lack of common interests, and parted company. After a few years I met my present wife, who like me was a member of the Melbourne Philharmonic Society, and this friendship prospered, with many common interests, and has been a happy one ever since. I began with an unlikely event, which led me to my interesting career in civil aviation radio. Another life-changing one was the discovery in about 1970 that I lived in the same street as John and Margaret Howes. Thus I joined a discussion group in which they took a prominent role, and that broadened my outlook and led to my making many good friends, some of whom I still see regularly. This aspect of my life was described in *Learningguild Letter* 1.2010 in some detail. I am glad to attend meetings of Learningguild occasionally and to keep in touch with John and Margaret.

Meditation: its history and its value

RICHARD ARNOLD, *a minister in the Uniting Church and a member of the Victorian committee of the Australian Christian Meditation Community, follows his talk at our Saturday Meeting on August 18th with this article.*

In the past fifty years there has been a steadily growing interest in meditation around the world. In the late 1960s the Beatles spent time with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Many others from the West went to the East to explore various forms of meditation. Some of these seekers became followers of Transcendental Meditation, whilst others became Buddhists or followers of other forms. In recent years there has also been a rediscovery of meditation in other faith traditions, including the Christian, and a growth of interest in it from a non-religious perspective.

The *Oxford Dictionary of British and World English* defines 'meditate' with the words "to focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes, or as a method of relaxation".

There are fundamentally three approaches to meditation.

Concentration meditation typically focuses on an "object" of concentration so that the mind can rest from all its continual "chatter". Examples include focusing on a chant or mantra, visualizing an image, or observing the breath. **Mindfulness** meditation focuses on present awareness: for example of one's surrounding environment and a particular part, e.g., a bird, or a leaf, or even the washing of dishes, while letting go everything else. **Stillness** meditation sets aside all concentration and awareness. The mind does not do anything, but just remains still in a state of "being". All thought and mental activity is simply "given a rest". This approach was pioneered by Ainslie Meares, an Australian doctor, particularly for overcoming anxiety and healing cancer.

Meditative practices can be found in all the major religious traditions, and there are hundreds of different methods.

Hinduism is one of the oldest religious traditions, going back many thousands of years. Yoga is one expression of it, incorporating various styles of meditation, including repeating a mantra and observing the breath. 'Mantra' is actually a Sanskrit word meaning a clearing of the mind. Meditation is thought to have evolved around 800 BC as a reaction to ritualistic Hinduism. It is part of a "whole of life" practice.

Buddhism also began as a reaction to some of the ritualism of Hinduism around the 5th century CE. Its ways of meditating include observing the breath or one's own walking, playing the Shakuhachi flute, and even attention to the Zen tea ceremony. A number of prominent Buddhists have brought an awareness of meditation to the West, including the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh (mindfulness) and the Dalai Lama.

In Islam the Sufi tradition has meditative practices aimed at purifying the ego, or emptying oneself of it, in order to get in touch with the truth. There are various practices aimed at concentration and overcoming blockages. The whirling dervishes spin to remove them and to unwind. Chanting and nodding are also used. It could also be argued that the daily prayer practised five times a day by most Muslims is a form of meditation in that it centres the mind on God.

In Judaism there is a mystical tradition called Kabbalah which aims to attain a heightened knowledge of God. It began about 800 years ago. There is a body of texts that reinterpret the Torah, and through meditation, which occurs only as one reflects on them, one can enter into the ever-flowing stream of divine presence.

In aboriginal culture the people of the Daley River region of the Northern Territory have a meditation practice about which one of the elders, Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, has this to say:

> What I want to talk about is another special quality of my people. … It is perhaps the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. In our language this quality is called Dadirri. It is inner, deep listening and quiet awareness. Dadirri recognizes the deep spring that is inside us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call contemplation.

Dadirri has similarities to mindfulness meditation. We could be sitting by a river, listening to a bird call, or sitting and drinking a cup of tea. Living fully in the present moment, just where we are, is a gift of the creator spirit. Dadirri is a way of becoming connected with that spirit, and indigenous people experience this in relationship with the land, each other, and creation.

In Christianity there is also a rich heritage of meditation, stretching right back to Jesus. The gospels have much to say about prayer and so meditation. The teaching is that prayer is an interior process of few words (Matthew 6: 6 & 7). In the life of the early church, some men and women lived in the desert as hermits, with a strict, spiritual lifestyle. Some of them, known as the desert fathers and mothers, grouped together into monastic communities and developed a common order for their life together, balancing prayer and daily living. Meditation was one of the practices which developed in these communities. The roots of Western, including Celtic, monasticism come from the desert tradition.

One pilgrim who went into the desert in the early 5th century was John Cassian. He and his friend Germanus were taught a "formula" for prayer by Abba Issac. Today we would describe his formula as a mantra. St Benedict of Nursia in Italy (born 480 CE), heavily influenced by the writings of John Cassian, founded many Christian monastic

communities and developed a rule for monks living in community that included a practice of prayer. Some call Benedict the father of Western monasticism and he deeply influenced the evolution of Western Christendom.

There has also been a long tradition of meditation in the Orthodox or Eastern Church from the earliest times. The Jesus Prayer is a form of meditating in the Orthodox Church in which the word 'Jesus' is used as a mantra.

The knowledge of meditation has been handed on from the early times and there have been many other key figures who have kept the tradition of meditation and mysticism alive, including St Bernard of Clairvaux, Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingham, Julian of Norwich, and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* to name a few. There were also key figures in the Spanish church during the sixteenth century, including St Ignatius of Loyola, St Teresa of Avilla, and St John of the Cross. In the 20th century three particular monks have been instrumental in the revival of meditation: Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating and John Main. Each rediscovered meditation in a slightly different way.

Today we live in a world which is facing an environmental crisis, is torn apart by poverty and international tensions, and has increasing levels of unhappiness at the local level. Our materialistic and consumer-based society is creating great crises, and doesn't seem to satisfy the deeper yearnings of human beings. Consequently there are many people seeking something deeper in their lives, something more fulfilling than what materialism and consumerism offers. For many, meditation meets this need. Meditation has been practised for thousands of years. It originally evolved to help people deepen their relationship with the mystery of life. This continues to be a major focus, but meditation is also used for relaxation and stress reduction. Medical science is studying meditation as a practice which promotes health and can assist in healing. A number of practitioners are investigating the value of meditation in mental health and in helping people deal with addictions.

Meditation helps those who engage in it to pay attention and to take the focus away from themselves, their daydreams, illusions, and internal "chatter" or "videos". It can become a practice which mirrors the whole of life and gives people the freedom to live life in its fullness.

According to John Main, in Christian meditation silent attention can break down the barriers that the ego creates to unity with God. The practice of silently repeating a "mantra" or "prayer word" can help create this silent attention. In the practice, the mantra is sounded interiorly during the time of meditation (around 25 minutes) so that the mind becomes centred on God within.

For more about Christian meditation, the Australian Christian Meditation Community has a website www.christianmeditationaustralia.org. It is excellent, including many resources for new and experienced meditators to go to. The Community has an annual program which includes silent days, community days and retreats. It provides a list of meditation groups around the country.

Above all meditation is something that is practised. It is possible to write and talk endlessly about it, but the fruits come from doing it. Meditation seeks to join the heart and the head. A wise teacher once made the cryptic comment "Meditation is not what you think."

John Howes has asked me how I regard meditation in comparison with the regular use of books or booklets of private prayer, in particular those that remind one of "all the blessings of this life" and include ways in which one could be more responsive to the needs of others.

I believe that all methods of entering into relationship with God (or the divine mystery) have value for human beings, including those mentioned by John. I believe also, however, that each person subconsciously creates an egocentric self: that is part of "the human condition". Meditation helps us to create an inner space where the attention is taken off that egocentric self, so that, with a loosening of barriers, the divine energy may flow into our life and open us to the needs of others created in God's image.

Corrections and apology

In Jim Richardson's article "Museum, cathedral and high-speed train", on p.5 of our last issue (1.2012), the date given at the foot of column 1 should have been 2025, and these words should have followed: "Gaudi was a devout Catholic, a Catalan nationalist, and a lifelong bachelor. His creation …". I apologize for these errors. JH

China's appropriation of Western science – with Japanese loanwords

GUANMIN HU *gained in China a Bachelor's degree in Japanese and then graduated at La Trobe University, in Melbourne, as a Master of Agricultural Science. At our Saturday Meeting on September 1st he gave a talk of which this is a revised text.*

China did not learn much from Japan until the end of the nineteenth century, because there were few contacts between the ruling groups in the two countries until the Japanese army defeated the Chinese at that time. People know that Japan had respected China as a teacher and made use of Chinese characters to create the Japanese alphabet a thousand years before, but few have been aware of the history of loanwords from Japanese to Chinese, which did not begin until around the end of the nineteenth century and continued until about 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established. After giving some historical background, I illustrate the nature of these loanwords.

Chinese did not again take loanwords from Japanese until 1978, when China began to reform its economic structure and opened its gates to overseas investment. The Soviet influence on Chinese learning from foreign countries was significant, but, even after 1949, Russian words did not replace loanwords from Japanese, nor did words from other languages, in Chinese publications and conversation. In fact, even more words have been translated from Japanese to Chinese from 1978 to the present, but I am not going to cover them. Most Chinese know which words they are, but it is not common knowledge that many words in present-day Chinese were translated from Japanese before 1949.

The influence of the Dutch on Japan and translation into Japanese

Japan made use of Chinese characters about 1000 years ago and benefited a great deal from Chinese knowledge and culture. After six centuries, Japan widened its horizons. From 1641 Holland was given a piece of land in western Japan for trading and exchange of culture. Books in medicine, botany, mechanics etc. were introduced by the Dutch. In fact, Dutch was the first Western language to become popular in Japan. Earlier, the Portuguese had occupied the same piece of land, but the Japanese rulers did not respect their activities. The influence of French or of British culture was not dominant in Japan, in contrast with that of other Asian countries, until around 1830 when the English and the French armies attacked Japan.

Many new and unfamiliar terms were translated from Dutch to Japanese over 200 years from 1641. Some were words for gravity, attraction, centre of mass, centrifugal force, oxidation, reduction, saturation and elements. The Japanese did not put these words into their own characters, but into Chinese characters in Japanese forms still comprehensible by writers of Chinese. The Chinese characters were chosen because they were neat and short, and so easily understood, both by the upper class and by peasants who could read.

Wider sources for translation into Japanese

Japan opened its gates wider to western influence from the middle of the nineteenth century because the US army and the British signed agreements with the Japanese rulers. Their contents included the opening of more ports to foreign trade and the modification of customs rules that favoured overseas traders. Such agreements enabled the Japanese to trade at some ports in the USA and Great Britain, but they could not themselves take goods there without ships suitable for long-distance travel. As a result, they were losing money from trading with those countries, which kept buying Japanese products cheaply and selling their own products at an unreasonably high price.

The Dutch influence faded away because their settlement land was occupied by other European countries. Many Japanese came to realise that Dutch was no longer the best language through which to learn western knowledge and culture, and so they began to study English, French and German. The purpose of learning European languages was not as simple as it had been 200 years earlier, for Japan was in big trouble from the middle of the nineteenth

century. The Japanese needed to learn new technology and to appropriate knowledge quickly from developed western countries in order to minimise the margin between themselves and the invaders and finally drive them out. Unfamiliar words were translated from English, French and German into Japanese from the mid-1800s.

The Qing in China and attitudes towards them

From the middle of the 17th until early in the 20th century, the area we now call China was occupied by the people called Qing. They were a group of nomads who had invaded from the north and lived in an area comprising some regions of present-day China, Russia and North Korea. The traditional meaning of 'China' does not include the areas in Xinjiang and Tibet. They were not occupied by the dynasty before the Qing, and the House of Qing entered them in the early eighteenth century. It was the last feudal dynasty, enduring until 1912. The occupation of China by the Qing started in 1644 and its influence in China, Xinjiang and Tibet ended in 1912. From now on I am going to say 'the Qing', rather than 'the House of Qing', because it is clear that a dynasty had emerged from a group of nomads. The Qing did not control Xinjiang and Tibet as firmly as they controlled traditional areas of China. Both regions enjoyed a relatively high level of autonomy.

The Qing had always been satisfied by the perfect location of China and the fact that only civilised and well-mannered people were living there. They never planned to extend their invasion to neighbouring regions, which they regarded as inferior. However, they entered Xinjiang and Tibet to drive off some Mongols who lived in these regions and created threats to them, and to stop the spreading of non-Qing and non-Chinese religions to lands belonging to them. Each emperor needed to suppress waves of Chinese riots, so that the Qing could control the land of China forever. From emperors to ordinary people, most of them preferred to cut off connections with non-Chinese and non-Qing culture and products. More Dutch ships reached a much smaller country, Japan, than came to China, because the Dutch could not break through the xenophobic practices of the Qing. Japan might not have received a great deal of influence from the Dutch if the Qing had accepted them and people from other European nations.

The Japanese did not respect the Qing, who were not being served by the most respected Chinese intellectuals, whom the Qing had despised but began to value from the middle of the nineteenth century because they, like the Japanese, were in trouble from that time. The Japanese lost their patience with the slow recovery of Chinese culture in China and their focus of learning was changed to the West. The decline of the political status of the whole land of China, from a country run by intellectuals to one run by a group of nomads, became a contributory factor in accelerating the process of westernisation of Japan.

A wake-up for the Chinese

The nightmare for the Qing was not only a series of western invaders from Britain, France, Spain and the USA. In 1895, the army was routed by the Japanese on the battlefields in Korea. That country used to pay tribute in exchange for protection by the Qing, but from 1895 became a colony of Japan. In 1905 even the north-eastern region where the Qing nomads originated was subdued in the conflict between Russia and Japan. The acquisition of knowledge and culture from developed Western countries began in China from the middle of the nineteenth century, but many Chinese elites began to think of Japan no longer as a "little brother" to China, but as a monster staring at their land. After the defeat in Korea, the focus changed to Japan, because many of those Chinese elites discovered that numerous unfamiliar terms in mechanics, medicine and chemistry, which the Chinese had spent a long time in translating from different western languages not long before, had been in Japanese books years earlier. Moreover, most words in Japanese books were in Japanese characters, more easily understood than their counterpart words taken from European languages. Hence a large number of books were translated from Japanese into Chinese, and thousands of teenagers from the upper-class Qing and other Chinese families were sent to Japan to study from 1900 to early in the 1910s. The purpose of learning new technology and culture was to drive out invaders of the land of China so that the Qing's dominance would not be challenged. It was a different story from that of Japan: there even the emperor's family wanted a strong and westernised country.

There were three booms in China in learning Japanese and benefiting from Japan's significantly westernised culture. The first and second have been mentioned and given dates above. The last was from the mid-1910s to early in the 1930s. Most Chinese students studying in Japan during the second boom did not speak Japanese. They in fact em-

ployed a person who spoke the language and interpreted to them after a class. Both the second and third booms stimulated the use of Japanese words in Chinese characters, and most of these loanwords were brought into Chinese without much change because their meanings were already shown by Chinese characters in Japanese.

What kinds of loanwords?

According to a list made by a Japanese professor, around 800 Japanese words had been absorbed into Chinese before 1950. Most replaced words with similar meanings that had been "translated" into Chinese by merely imitating the pronunciation of the original western words.

Medicine: exocrine (external, exodus), hypnosis (help, sleep), neurasthenia (weak, spirit), organs (functions, part), psychology (study, spirit), whooping cough (cough, hundred, days), veins (blood, tube).

Physics: equation (format), illusion (unnatural, feeling), phenomenon (hint, shown), radius (half, unit), resonance (sounds, together).

Business: club (happy, group), concrete (mixed, solid, soil), income tax (earnings, tax), index (finger, number), labour union (workers, meeting), monopoly (assembly, cutting off), real estate (no, moving, goods), recycle (cycle, circle), trade deficit (minus, growth)

Biology: catalyst (go-between), degradation (breaking down), digestion (remove, separate), fibre (bonds, grasses), protein (egg, white).

Geology: altitude (sea, elevation), fossil (separation, stones)

Philosophy: Christianity (base, oversee, religion), communism (products, together), democracy (people, control), metaphysics (theory, philosophy), obligation (justice, mission), pantheism (theory, broad, gods), proletarian (step, no, products), sociology (theory, group).

Miscellaneous: comedy (happy, show), the Cabinet (inside, attic), interrogation (basin, ask), library (image, book, mansion), sports (transportation, movement), steam (steam, gas), school motto (school, discipline), symphony (mix, sound, music).

Because of the easily-understood Chinese characters in Japanese, many of these loanwords not only occur frequently in current publications and conversation, but also serve as main words in spoken sentences. Thanks to the infusion of Japanese words which represent the meanings of new western words, the Chinese are speaking and writing in a form of Chinese that is easy to understand.

Below are examples of sound-based and meaning-based adaptations of English words into Chinese and into Japanese respectively. The words in the fourth column are borrowed from Japanese for use in Chinese.

English	conveying sound		conveying meaning	meanings of elements
dictator(ship)	**狄克推多**	(di ke tui duo)	**独裁**	sole, tailor
economy	爱康诺米	(ai kang nuo mi)	经济	operate, pass through
science	赛因斯	(sai en si)	**科学**	select, subject
telephone	**德律**风	(de lü feng)	电话	electricity, speak
ultimatum	**哀的美**顿	(ai di mei dun)	**最后通牒**	ultimate, after, pass, notice
unit	**幺匿**	(yao ni)	单位	single, position

The words in the fourth column were created in the early 1900s and are still used in Japanese and Chinese. Both Japanese and Chinese readers can understand much of the meaning of the words in that column, whereas the (meaningless in themselves) sets of characters in column 2 are mere "echoing" of the English words.

On the next four pages, as a supplement, are the two letters of mine that I referred to on p.2. I hope they will give rise to comments and questions from members and others in Australia, China, India and perhaps other countries. I add a note below each. JH

Supplement to *Learningguild Letter* 2.2012

Letters to Students 2012

(1) 28 November

Reply to a letter from Allyson (University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu) dated 24 November 2012.

Dear Allyson,

I am very glad to have your letter. I must be careful, in answering it now from my home in Melbourne, to emphasize to you that it is not right for me to send an answering letter to any student at your university unless he or she is ready to give a copy of it to any other student there who asks for one, since, as a visiting teacher, I must not give one student any written assistance that is not available to another. I shall send a copy to Professor Li Jianli who invited me to give the lecture and respond to questions on the 7th of November (I shall always remember that delightful occasion), and I shall ask him to tell me the name of one or more of the teachers of English at the University, since I ought to let them know that I am corresponding about English with students at their university. Of course I should be glad to discuss any matter with him and/or with any of them.

Your letter has led me to find out about the GRE test as it now is. I strongly recommend that you look up 'GRE Test' on the internet, and find the general page put there by ETS (Educational Testing Service, based in California, I think) headed "About the GRE revised General Test". Note that a revised test was introduced in August 2011. Go to the page shown in the left margin "Test Content and Structure", and I think you will agree with me that knowledge of the meanings of an immense range of words is likely to be less important than you make it appear, and perhaps than it was in the (unbalanced and unsatisfactory?) previous form of the test. To become better informed, and to be better able to help students preparing for GRE, I have today bought for $US35 an e-book, *The Official Guide ...*, mentioned on the ETS's page that comes up when you look up the item given in the left margin of that general page by "Prepare for the Test".

My short answer to your two questions is "Learn and revise both the spelling and the pronunciation of a word." That will help you both for the GRE and in the general development of your English, and it will get easier as you continue with it. As your vocabulary increases, if you attend to both spelling and pronunciation, and go on marking and revising things you want to remember, it will get easier to work out the probable pronunciation of a new word, and to remember its spelling, partly in comparison (sometimes in contrast) with those of other words. Try always to use a dictionary such as the one I passed round, with both the international phonetic script and example-sentences (let's write 'ES' and, for the plural, 'ESes').

My main advice to you and to others who are relative beginners in English must be to learn and follow the basic rules of English sentence-construction. Those rules are the rules of what is called syntax: that word comes from two ancient Greek words meaning placing together, and so syntax provides principles for putting together words in a grammatical way. Let me concentrate for the present on your heading:

> Student from china want to ask professor John Howes some questions, after listened his lecture in Chengdu, china

First I'll correct that at non-syntactical points. At present I'm best referred to with 'Doctor', so, as is important, being careful with capital letters, we'll write, for further correction,

> Student from China want to ask Dr John Howes some questions, after listened his lecture in Chengdu, China.

It is absolutely basic that you must write there *wants*, not *want*. Why? Every English statement or question has a "matching pair" (think of a pair of socks, of the same colour) of what I call a subject-locution (Sub-L) and a personed verb (PV), the latter traditionally called a finite verb. Each has to have the same label: 1S, 2S, 3S, 1P, 2P, or 3P. The letter S there is short for 'singular' and the letter P for 'plural', and the numerals are short for '1st person', '2nd person' and '3rd person'. The Sub-L pronouns are, in the same order for a table-of-six (use two parallel columns), *I, you, he/she/it, we, you, they*. If, through the combination of a Sub-L and a PV, you say something about one person or thing who is not yourself or the person you are addressing, or, as here, you are not referring to them with *I* or *you*, then the locution (usually one or more words or numerals) which you are making your Sub-L is 3S (3rd person singular), and so the PV must be 3S too, to make that matching pair. As in the opening examples in my grammar book (I hope the 3rd edition will appear quite early next year), the Sub-L may be one word or more: we may say 'Jim swims' or 'The boy swims' or 'He swims'. Because we are speaking or writing "in 3S", the verb must be 3S, so we have to say 'swims', not 'swim', and you, after the Sub-L 'A student from China' (for the article *A*, see below), must write 'wants'. Go through the table-of-six for many verbs, hissing out the *s* of the 3S form: *want, want, wantS, want, want, want*! (In other European languages there is much more change than that. English is not a highly inflected language, i.e., it is not one that changes its endings very much. But the changes it does make are vital.) So always be aware of your pairs of Sub-L and PV, and make sure that they match, and look out especially for 3S!

'After listened his lecture' is wrong in two ways. See p.8 of my booklet *SSC*, the para. numbered 2, on the intransitive use of verbs: *listen* is always used intransitively, and we say 'I listened to a lecture'. A woman writing our sentence (I assume that your name is that of a woman) needs to ask herself "Shall I use *After* as a conjunction here, before the words 'she listened', or as a preposition, before the gerund *listening*?" (For gerunds, see the first para. under 'ELEMENTS OF PARSING' on p.7 of *SSC*.) A man would ask the same question, but with 'he' instead of 'she'. On 'conjunction' and 'preposition', see p.7.) Here the gerund construction is better.

You must not use *student* (a singular NC: see p. 8 of *SSC*, 3) without an introductory word. So:

> A student from China wants to ask Dr John Howes some questions, after listening to his lecture in Chengdu, China.

As you could guess I would, I'll say that it is very helpful to get to know everything in *SSC* very well!* I shall try to ensure that most of what I write to you or other students at your university or elsewhere is of similar centrality for the learning of English. Ask me any questions with reference to any paragraph here, specifying it and what you don't understand or would like to hear more about. I may repeat part or all of this letter in writing to other people.

When you receive this, as I hope you will, please let me know.

With best wishes to you and to everyone else who was there on the 7th,

Yours sincerely,

John Howes

learningguild@gmail.com

* So many mistakes occur through not thinking of those distinctions drawn at 2 and 3 on p.8, and so not asking oneself, about verbs, "Is **this** verb used transitively, or intransitively, or in both ways?" and, about singular nouns, "Is **this** an NC (a noun for something thought of as countable with it) or an NU (a noun for something thought of as uncountable with it)?" The *Oxford Basic English* (or *Oxford Essential*) *Dictionary* answers the first question by its example(s) and the second by putting '(*no plural*)' for NUs. Many students have yet to discover the great value of the methods of work (with either of those dictionaries) recommended at 1, 4 and 5 on p.8: try combining the three, making brief notes and revising them soon after.

Letters to Students 2012

(2) 11 December

Dear students who read this letter,

I begin with that unusual greeting in order to include, primarily, those students who will read it and were among those who heard me lecture in China last month, but also my own pupils here in Melbourne and any other student readers of it there may come to be!

I ought to provide more context (immediate and wider) for my previous letter, of 28 November (let us call it LS2012.1), and especially to indicate what kinds of letters from students I especially invite in relation to this series, whether from Chinese students or any others. I do not imply that you should write about nothing else! I shall add some advice concerning the use you might make of my own and Raymond Murphy's publications.

It would not be sensible for people to ask me a question about vocabulary or grammar or punctuation or pronunciation that could be answered by recourse to a good dictionary or textbook or by asking the person or one of the persons teaching you in an English course, whom it would be sensible to consult. Notice, however, that the long relative clause from 'that' to 'course' (like 'who read this letter' in the greeting) is an **identifying** one, i.e., it limits the range of the questions in these areas that I am here excluding, whereas the relative clause from 'whom' to 'consult' is a **commenting** clause, including anyone who teaches you in such courses. (That difference explains why there is in the first sentence no comma before 'that', but a comma before 'whom'.) You might, for example, reasonably want to ask me a question in one of those four areas where a textbook has something you find puzzling, or where its terminology differs from mine, or where you and another student cannot resolve your disagreement. I should of course welcome such questions.

Another desirable range is of the type of Allyson's question, to which my first letter in this series responded. She was asking about how best to study English, in particular for the purpose of doing well in a particular test or exam, such as the GRE. I may take the opportunity, as I did in LS2012.1, to make some grammatical corrections, but only constructively. Anyone whose first language is not English and who writes to me deserves thanks from his or her fellow-students for doing so, thus providing opportunity for a letter of advice or suggestions from which they are likely to benefit too!

Thirdly, you might like to ask more general questions still: for example, about what I think is the nature of a really good education, at any of its stages (remember that I am just entering the **primary** stage in Chinese!), and in particular of a training in clear and critical thinking.

The immediate context of these letters is my having given two similar lectures in China (on how to study English, using the SSC method) and responded to questions from students, on the 7th of November, at the invitation of Professor Li Jianli, at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, in Chengdu, and on the 13th, at the invitation of Professor Xu Wen and Associate Professor Xiao Kairong, at Southwest University, at Beibei near Chongqing. (Professor Li Jianli recorded most of my lecture of the 7th, and some of the question-and-answer session that followed, and the recording has been edited by his friend Jiang Guang-chi here in Melbourne to make an audiovisual CD.) I invited students to write to me. I met other people during the four weeks in which my wife Margaret and I were in China, including schoolteachers and guides, and relatives of Jiang Guang-chi, and I wish to keep in contact with them too. I thank them for their helpfulness and hospitality.

The wider context is that of the educational and social movement Learningguild, of which I am President and to whose website I invite readers of this letter to go: **www.vicnet.net.au/~learngld**. Anyone in China who wants to go on learning and help others learn is welcome to become a member of Learningguild. All he or she needs to do is to let me or my wife know that he or she would like to be a member, and undertake to write to us at least once a year, either a letter such as Allyson wrote or an item of a different kind (perhaps news or views, or a review of a book) that could be considered for *Learningguild Letter*, our twice-yearly magazine. I hope that Chinese members will add to it a new dimension and much of interest.

I shall seek to arrange growing collections of my Learningguild publications (see the website pages indicated by 'Publications', 'Tuition', and 'Certificate') wherever they are requested or appear desirable. We should be glad sometimes to discuss what payments, if any, should be made for these, especially for multiple copies, but in many cases there need be no payment. Permission may be given for the making of copies.

I venture to give this basic advice to students of English whom I have addressed in China: get to know very well (revising it and reading it aloud, and talking about it with others) everything on pages 5, 7 and 8 in the booklet *SSC*, and engage in the work recommended there; and study my booklet-and-CD on the pronunciation of English *Sounds, Words, Sentences* (*SWS*). Experience tells me that it is very important for students to build such a double foundation for further study, with emphasis on understanding and precision. I like to say that students need to be both reliable and adventurous.

To do SSC work you need a suitable dictionary, one recommended there or, e.g., the one I circulated during my lectures, *Bilingual English-Chinese Dictionary*. Your dictionary must have example-sentences for many of the words it explains. I found in Chongqing that there is a Chinese edition (with some guidance in Chinese) of Raymond Murphy's excellent book *Essential Grammar in Use*. (Somehow the name given on the front cover was that of Martin Hewings, another writer for Cambridge University Press, but the book is Murphy's.) You would find it very valuable, e.g., for learning, using and revising the range of **tenses**, with their two "aspects", simple and continuous. Make sure that you have access to it, and consider buying it. There is also Murphy's book for the intermediate level, again excellent, *English Grammar in Use*.* I devised the SSC method after noticing how fruitful it was to ask students working through either of these books to add, at the foot of each pair of pages, two sentences relating the grammar of the particular unit to their own interests and situations. One couple, soon to be married, wrote such sentences about each other!

With best wishes to you all,

Yours sincerely,

John Howes

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* Continuing to regard both of Murphy's books as excellent, I point out three defects.

1. He uses the terms 'countable noun' and 'uncountable noun': but all **nouns** (which are **words**!) are of course countable, and it is **that to which they refer** (a chair or chairs, for example, or on the other hand oxygen or rain) that we should call countable or uncountable. Hence my terms 'NC' and 'NU': see the note that follows LS2012.1 (p.17 of this issue).
2. Though he has good material on prepositions used with verbs (Units 132-6 in the intermediate book), he does not draw the transitive/intransitive distinction, part of whose value is as a cautionary device: see again the note just mentioned.
3. He writes about '-ing' words, without distinguishing between present participles and gerunds.

Let's use the grammatical terms students need, and find or devise clear and accurate explanations.

Explore the resources of Learningguild.

Plentiful resources are readily available, especially for the study of reasoning and English expression, and we continue to add to them. Many that require no payment can be found by going to 'Certificate' on our website www.vicnet.net.au/~learngld.

You can study there five recent pairs of an examination paper for the Learningguild Certificate in Reasoning and Expression and a detailed report on that examination. The reports are full of advice and references. Valuable background is the editorial letter, in *Learningguild Letter* 1.2008 (to be found at 'Publications'), on the tradition of the *trivium*, the set of the *tres viae*, three paths, grammar, logic and rhetoric, which were rightly regarded as indispensable in secondary education but in recent years have been neglected. Earlier papers can be obtained, as far back as the first (September 1987), from Mrs Margaret Howes.* They, and for many the corresponding reports, may be bought for $3 each ($2.40 for members).

Our twice-yearly *Learningguild Letter* has appeared since 1989, and on the website there is a continuous set going back to 2004 as well as five supplements. In that issue 1.2008, for example, there are also from our members comments by two students on our seminar related to the *trivium*, a tribute to a much-loved deceased member, reviews of a book by a bishop and a guide for IELTS, and reports of travels in New Zealand and England and of an illustrated talk by an illustrator of children's books.

At 'Tuition' you can learn of our methods of teaching: mainly one-with-one, with emphasis on the student's own use of good materials, some our own and some by Raymond Murphy, Sir Ernest Gowers, and others.

Become a member of Learningguild.

Membership is open to everyone who wants to go on learning and help others learn. Within Australia, the subscription for the calendar year is $11 (for a couple $16.50). Outside Australia, anyone who applies is welcome to become a member without needing to pay a subscription, either by the provision of hospitality to other members or by undertaking to send news, views or questions at least once a year to *Learningguild Letter*.*

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