

ENGLink

Newsletter of the Department of English
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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Highlights

p.2
President's Visit

p.3
Visiting Indonesian
PhD Students

p.6
RCPCE Roundtable



The 16th PolyU Congregation – Faculty of Humanities

There were three conferment sessions organised by the Faculty of Humanities which were held on 6 and 7 November 2010. About 750 undergraduates and postgraduates were conferred degrees or awards. The Department has 145 graduates receiving postgraduate degrees or awards and 20 are from the first cohort of its new MA in English Language Arts programme. Another 80 graduates are from its top-up degree programme, BA in English for Business and Professional Communication.

Several student awards were also presented at the sessions to those graduates and current students who have outstanding academic performance.



● Dr Gail Forey (middle) and her students.



● Dr Chris Green (middle) and his students.

Department Updates

President's Visit

President Prof. Timothy W. Tong, together with Deputy President and Provost Philip C.H. Chan, and Executive Vice President Mr Nicholas W. Yang visited the Department on 13 December 2010. In addition to meetings with the Head, Associate Head, and senior staff, they attended sessions on academic activities and student representatives sharing. Much effort has been made to make the visit a fruitful one to allow the group to gain a deeper understanding of the Department.



Prof. Tong shares his views on different aspects of the Department.



Prof. Tong (back row, fourth from right) and Mr Nicholas Yang (back row, right) have an enjoyable sharing session with the student representatives.



Dr Djatmika (left) and Dr Tri Wiratno.

Visiting Indonesian Scholars

Between October and December 2010, two scholars from Sebelas Maret University in Solo, Indonesia visited the Department. Dr Djatmika finished a small research project here which is a book already in an on-going process for publication. There is also a field project with another scholar, Dr Tri Wiratno to explore how Indonesian children acquire their language to express stance from the perspective of language typology.

Meanwhile, Dr Tri Wiratno worked on his main project for writing a book in Indonesian language entitled *Pengantar Linguistik Sistemik Fungsional* (An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics) for Indonesian readers. He also worked with Prof. Christian Matthiessen, Head of the Department on a collaborative type of research on systemic strategies to improve the quality of reading texts in English course books for elementary schools in Indonesia. In addition, he collaborated with Dr Yap Foong Ha of the Department on two other projects which included the one working with Dr Djatmika.

Mentorship Programme for 2010/11 Academic Year

A gathering was organised on 17 December 2010 as the first activity for the programme in this academic year. Participants were able to know each other with some ice-breaking games. The core part of the programme was the introduction to Enneagram – a system to understand personality types. They also took a simplified scale of the test to find out their own personality type and how it relates to other types. This aims to facilitate the relationship building among the participants in the coming year.



Visiting Indonesian PhD Students

The Department had six visiting PhD students from Sebelas Maret University in Solo, Indonesia between September and December 2010. This is part of its collaboration with the University for the Indonesian "sandwich-like" programme. During the period, they met with teachers and PhD students of the Department for advice and suggestions on their special areas of expertise. They also attended seminars organised by the Department and some other universities in Hong Kong which further benefited their studies.

At the end of the visit, each of them shared some words about their stay:

"In order to pursue our educational prospects, the word 'cooperation' is the only word that I would like to express to PolyU. This cooperation, I think, is the key to pave the way to our future to educate and civilize young generations to make the world become a peaceful, beautiful and nice place to live in... The very outstanding thing that I always find here in PolyU is its very polite and civilized community. That is why I always hope that this cooperation will never end."
– Dolar Yuwono (Specialised area: translation)

"We were recommended to meet with all the teaching staff for consultations and discussions and to attend seminars conducted in this university and some other universities in Hong Kong... We also met outstanding persons in linguistics in the world such as Halliday, Ruqaiya Hassan, Matthiessen, Jim Martin, Sidney Lamb, and other scholars from different parts of the world."
– Jafar Sodiq (Specialised area: translation)

"I would like to thank all professors and teachers of the English Department who provided me insightful comments and suggestions on my dissertation proposal. And I deeply appreciate the excellent friends here, especially the PhD students for their unconditional support on my dissertation proposal. The Department really helped me in gaining an understanding on a lot of issues of linguistics and gave me an engaging experience."
– Mujiono Tri (Specialised area: descriptive linguistics)

"Thanks to those teachers who cared and guided me by giving me many references based on my proposal. The English Department in PolyU is very good because it collaborates with professional associations. The atmosphere supports the system in teaching and learning English as a language. The strategies can make the English communication effective. It seems that PolyU English Department has a positive learning environment."
– MV Sri Hartini (Specialised area: descriptive linguistics)

"As the only student majoring in language teaching among the six visiting PhD students, my activities here included deepening my knowledge through reading books, journals, articles related to my thesis proposal. I also had an intensive discussion on Genre-based Pedagogy, the topic I would like to write for my thesis, with Dr Sue Hood, a senior lecturer from The University of Technology Sydney in Australia... The English Department staff are all very kind, hospitable, and helpful."
– Slamet Wiyono (Specialised area: language teaching)

"Much of our time in this department in particular and in this university in general has been spent on meeting and having consultations and discussions with professors and senior lecturers... We also got valuable opportunities by sitting in classes and attending many seminars in this university and other universities in Hong Kong so that we could meet the world-class speakers. I have attended a seminar where Halliday and Ruqaiya Hassan were there. It was really fantastic!"
– Netty Nurdiyani (Specialised area: descriptive linguistics)

◦ (Front row from left): MV Sri Hartini, Netty Nurdiyani and Mujiono Tri. (Back row from left): Slamet Wiyono, Jafar Sodiq and Dolar Yuwono.



The 4th “Talking Across the World” Conference (25 – 27 November 2010)

The Department and its Research Center for Professional Communication in English, collaborated with the Department of English and Applied Linguistics at De La Salle University (DLSU) and Future Perfect Business English Specialists to run and organize *The 4th Talking Across the World (TAW) conference: English Communication Skills from Commodity to Quality*, in Manila, Philippines. Our collaboration with DLSU provides us with an exciting opportunities to further develop ties and joint projects together.

Papers and workshops at the TAW4 Conference included assessing language for work impact; modes of adult learning in the workplace; curriculum innovation and evaluation in BPO English communication training; intercultural communication and its place in training; discourse analysis and linguistic research and academic and workplace partnering. The papers represented leading transdisciplinary research from education, linguistics, intercultural communication, computing and organizational management, and lead to stimulating discussions in a collaborative and friendly forum.

The keynote speakers were outstanding and included Professor Philip Taylor, Professor in the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Strathclyde in United Kingdom; Dr Rachel Edita O. Roxas, Dean of the College of Computer Studies at De La Salle University, in Manila and our Department Head and Chair Professor, Professor Christian Matthiessen.

The conference was sponsored by Cambridge University Press, who sponsored the conference dinner at a seafood restaurant overlooking the sunset at Manila harbor. JobsDB.com also sponsored the conference.

The previous three TAW Conferences were hosted in 2006 and 2007 in Manila and 2008 in Bangalore, India. In total, we have involved close to 400 academic researchers and BPO professionals in the conferences. We hope to see you presenting or joining us in the coming TAW5 Conference.

Details of the Conference and papers are available at: <http://www.talkingacrosstheworld.org/default.html>



Prof. Christian Matthiessen Speaks at Knowledge Transfer Conference

Chair Professor and Head Prof. Christian Matthiessen was invited to give a presentation at one of the non-technology sessions of the Knowledge Transfer Conference on 9 November 2010. The title of the presentation is “Appliable Science of Language: The Exchange Between University and Community”.

The Conference, which was held on 8 – 9 November 2010, was organised for the first time and was supported by Innovation and Technology Fund of the HKSAR Government and the University Grants Committee (UGC).



Departmental Seminars

1 Discursing the ethics of accounting work: individual accounts of (un)ethical practice (19 October 2010)

In this seminar, Dr Alan Jones from Macquarie University in Australia presented his discourse analyses of excerpts from selected turns-at-talk that he carried out in collaboration with Dr Samantha Sin, who explored current conceptions of accounting work. In those interviews, interviewees were encouraged to problematise their positions on professional ethics, resulting in extended turns in which typically an emergently coherent position was gradually developed in relation to ethical challenges they themselves had experienced or observed in the workplace. These revealed some of the discursive strategies employed by accountants to develop a sense of self-identity in relation to ethical issues and challenges.



2 Round Table Discussion on Language Documentation and Cultural Preservation (16 November 2010)

The speaker of this seminar was Prof. Randy LaPolla from La Trobe University in Australia. In this seminar, he firstly discussed why language documentation is crucial in preserving those endangered languages. Then he brought up a lively Round Table Discussion by addressing issues like the reason and importance of native/fluent speakers of Chinese and English to care about linguistic and cultural diversity.



3 Multisemiotic Research and Global Business Communication (14 December 2010)

The talk was given by Prof. Eija Ventola from Aalto University in Finland. She discussed how the Internet has rendered multimodal realizations possible for business communication research. It also plays a part in pushing research interests, developments of theories and analytical ways. She illustrated with an example from the business context in corporate media events (Nokia, Apple). This explained a multi-faceted business communication research agenda is needed to understand the complexity of issues.



Below are other seminars that took place between October and December 2010:

- * *Mimicking and mocking identities: the roles of language and body language in Taylor Mali's 'Speak with conviction'* (4 November)
— Dr Sue Hood, University of Technology, Sydney
- * *'I was there': recontextualising story genres into academic writing* (18 November)
— Dr Sue Hood, University of Technology, Sydney
- * *Sickness Absence and Absence Management: From Welfarism to Where* (22 November)
— Professor Phil Taylor, Strathclyde Business School, Glasgow, UK
- * *From Boom to Where? The Globalization of Business Services in the Aftermath of Financial Crisis and Recession* (23 November, jointly organised with Department of Management and Marketing)
— Professor Phil Taylor, Strathclyde Business School, Glasgow, UK
- * *Corpus linguistics and the analysis of the discourse: The case of the lexical item civilised world* (24 November)
— Professor Wolfgang Teubert, University of Birmingham, UK
- * *From Lexicogrammar to Situational Context – the Theoretical Construction of Socio-Semiotic Distance* (2 December)
— Dr Marvin Lam, Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
- * *Encounters with genre: apprehending cultural frontiers* (11 December, jointly organised with Shenzhen University)
— Professor Jim Martin, University of Sydney

Recent Events by the Research Centre for Professional Communication in English (RCPCE)

1. RCPCE Roundtable: Professional communication in English: Hong Kong experience and practice (12 October 2010)

Discussants: Professor Vijay Bhatia (City University of Hong Kong) and Dr Alan Jones (Macquarie University, Australia)

Speakers: Mable Chan, Winnie Cheng, Stephen Evans, Lynne Flowerdew, Gail Forey, Cheng Le, Francis Low, David Qian, Helen Wan, Martin Warren and Dora Wong

◦ Prof. Huang Chu-ren, Dean of Faculty of Humanities gives an opening remarks at the Roundtable.



2. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshop for the Hong Kong Institute of Utility Specialists (7 December 2010)

Workshop title: "Sixty for communication skills...and forty for technical knowledge": Understanding professional communicative competences of professionals in engineering

Speaker: Professor Winnie Cheng

The seminar described an interdisciplinary project between English Studies academics and engineers, surveyors and architects. The collaborative project involves the RCPCE and Hong Kong Institute of Utility Specialists (HKIUS). The seminar reported on the analysis of 474 completed questionnaires, with a focus on the relative frequencies of use of languages (Chinese and English; Cantonese, Mandarin and English), use of different written and spoken text types, perceived importance of these text types, and perceived difficulty of these text types. It also reported on the findings of 36 interviews with a focus on the professionals' opinions of their different competences in professional communication, and how the competencies are valued and evaluated in their workplaces. Based on the findings, the seminar discussed some implications for effective English communication in the engineering profession.



PolySystemic: Language and Education Symposium (21 January 2011)

The Symposium will address the most recent research in English language teaching and English across the curriculum. Talks will include a wide range of topics, eg. genre based pedagogy, using English to construct knowledge in history and science textbooks, reading to learn, curriculum development, internet and teaching challenges, the challenges of EMI university education, teacher autonomy, along with other areas of interest. The speakers provide an international and also a local perspective on a range of significant areas for Hong Kong teachers. The two keynote speakers for the conference are:

1. Prof. Beverly Derewianka, University of Wollongong, Australia

Title: Ideology, ignorance and incompetence: A Bernsteinian perspective on curriculum development in Australia

2. Dr Caroline Coffin, The Open University, United Kingdom

Title: The new digital landscape: A challenge for language users, observers and educational designers?

More details about the Symposium can be found at: <http://www.engl.polyu.edu.hk/PolySystemic/>