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Participants of the Symposium

7th International Symposium on Teaching English at Tertiary Level (13 - 14 October 2011)

Jointly organised by the English Department (ENGL) of PolyU and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures (DFLL) of Tsinghua University in Beijing, the 7th International Symposium on Teaching English at Tertiary Level (ISTETL) took place in Hong Kong in October 2011. The School of International Studies of Zhejiang University also contributed to the Symposium as a co-organiser.



Representatives from both institutions welcome key speakers and guests of the Symposium.

Professor Christian Matthiessen, Head of ENGL, and Professor Alister Cumming, Head of the Centre for Educational Research in Languages and Literacies, University of Toronto, gave theme-setting keynote speeches for the Symposium. Professor He Lianzhen, Professor Jin Yan and Professor Zou Shen, widely recognised as leading language testers in the Chinese mainland, presented an insightful plenary colloquium on the current status of and challenges for English language assessment at tertiary level in China. The colloquium was convened by Professor David Qian with Professor Alister Cumming serving as the discussant.

More than 180 presentation proposals from 22 countries and regions were received, which set a historical record for the Symposium. A rigorous peer review has shortlisted around 70 high-quality proposals, which were presented during the two-day Symposium. It is encouraging to note that a record number of over 130 participants has attended the Symposium. The 8th ISTETL will take place in Beijing in late August, 2012.

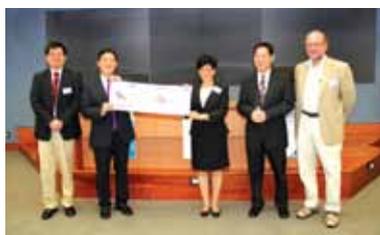
Inauguration of the PolyU-Tsinghua U Centre for Language Sciences

October 2011 also witnessed the inauguration of the PolyU-Tsinghua U Centre for Language Sciences (PTCLS), which is a milestone signifying a further strengthening of intercollegiate relations between PolyU's ENGL and DFLL of Tsinghua University on the basis of the existing close academic collaborations at multiple levels between the two departments for more than a decade. At the opening session of the 7th ISTETL, the Centre was inaugurated by Professor Angelina Yuen, Vice President (Institutional Advancement and Partnership) of PolyU, and Professor Huang Chu-ren, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, PolyU. Overseen by the Centre Board, the operation of PTCLS is directed by a Management Committee with Professor Christian Matthiessen (Ex-officio), Professor David Qian (Centre Director) and Dr Li Lan (Associate Centre Director) representing PolyU on the Committee.

On 12 October, prior to the opening of the 7th ISTETL, a half-day PTCLS Roundtable was held for its members to share their research work. The Roundtable was attended by over 30 PTCLS members from both Departments. Professor Alister Cumming from the University of Toronto also attended the Roundtable in his capacity as an Honourary Advisor to PTCLS. The Centre currently has a membership of 37, with 19 from PolyU and 18 from Tsinghua University. Please contact Professor David Qian (egdavid@polyu.edu.hk) for further information on PTCLS.



One of the parallel presentation sessions



From left: Prof. Huang Chu-ren, Dean, Faculty of Humanities; Prof. Liu Shisheng, Dean, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Tsinghua University; Prof. Angelina Yuen, Vice President (IAP); Prof. David Qian, Director, PolyU-Tsinghua U Centre for Language Sciences, PolyU and Prof. Christian Matthiessen, Head, Department of English witness the inauguration of the PTCLS.

The 17th PolyU Congregation – Faculty of Humanities

The Faculty has organised three conferment sessions on 5 and 6 November 2011. About 880 undergraduates and postgraduates were conferred degrees or awards. The Department has 166 graduates receiving postgraduate degrees or awards. Another 154 graduates are from its undergraduate programmes and 77 are the first cohort of graduates from BA in English Studies for the Professions.

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



Talks and Activities Bring a Broader Look of Spain



The first term of the 2011-2012 year saw a great deal with events organized by Renia Lopez for students of Spanish, one of the electives offered in the Department. The first event of the term was the talk by the Peruvian Consul, Mr Malaga, who talked about Peru and its cultural and financial ties with China. This talk was supplemented by that given by Ms Gloria Su, a Chinese-Peruvian, also a teacher of Spanish, who showed the links between aspects of the Chinese language and the Spanish spoken in Peru.

The Chilean Consulate donated over 30 books to the PolyU library.

Spain celebrates its national day in October and as such both the Consulate and the Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong organised a series of events, including parties, films and exhibitions. About 50 of our students celebrated with Hong Kong Spaniards at their "Fiesta".

We were also very grateful to have the Consul of Chile, Mr Artaza, who talked about his country and his work to develop a trade agreement between Hong Kong and Chile which, no doubt, will benefit students as well. The Chilean Consulate also donated over 30 books to our library. The Spanish Consul, Mr Nadal, also gave a very interesting talk on the causes of the current situation in Spain and Mr Sanz, from the Spanish Trade Commission, highlighted the differences between the real Spain and the stereotyped Spain.

In addition to the informative talks, students also had the opportunity to attend a number of film screenings, all in Spanish and either from Spain or South America. These were chosen to highlight a particular aspect of the history or the culture of the country they portrayed.

On 8 December, students enjoyed the performance of the "Cuarentena de Valencia", a group that performs traditional Spanish songs dressed in the attire of the 16th century. This event took place in the podium of PolyU campus and attracted not only students but all passers-by who were lucky enough to be there at the time. Their music certainly brought joy to every participant!



The traditional Spanish songs performed by the group cheer all the audience up!

Departmental Seminars

1

Assessing Writing in Second Languages: Trends in Research and Pedagogy (11 October 2011)

In this seminar, Professor Alister Cumming from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto reviewed some of his recent research projects, and the synthesis of published research, key trends in theories, research, and practices related to assessing writing in second languages. The review considered formal tests as well as classroom practices and highlights several new emerging conceptualizations.



2

Models for Integration: teaching written communication skills and business (7 November 2011)

The seminar was conducted by Dr Maree Stenglin from the School of Business in University of Sydney, Australia. She used a case study to delineate how one approach to teaching communication informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was used to 'unpack' the demands of the genre and develop a pedagogy for teaching written communication skills to a diverse cohort of 450 students. In addition, the impact of this approach was explored through the detailed analysis of 25 pre-intervention and 25 post-intervention samples of student writing. It is argued that to teach rhetorically complex texts, vertical and horizontal integration have much to offer because of their potential for transfer via skill reinforcement, across and between a number of units, in progressively more complex ways.



3

Film Studies Meets Language Studies: Using Linguistic Analyses of Film in the Language Classroom (5 December 2011)

Claims that Language Studies and Film Studies are naturally connected have been made for some time now. With the issues raised by the article 'The Discourse of Pictures: Iconicity and Film Studies' (1993), Professor Andy Curtis from the Graduate School of Education, Anaheim University, California, USA looked at what can be achieved when these two disciplinary domains are brought together in the language classroom.



An Evening of Your Poetry with Visiting Poet Shirley Geok-Lin Lim (16 December 2011)



On 16 December, the Department had an evening of poetry reading. We were delighted to have Dr Shirley Lim visiting the Department from UC-Santa Barbara. Dr Lim is a Professor in the Department of English at UC-Santa Barbara, and is also a noted poet, having written poems and short stories, as well as literary criticism. The event was well attended. Dr Lim read some of her poems, with several other Hong Kong poets also reading their work. Among these was student of MA in English Language Arts (MAELA) Dominique Zhang Yang, who read his pleasurable ironic poem, "Hong Kong - an Ugly City", which was received with appreciation and laughter. We are pleased to be able to share this with readers. We are also very pleased that this event has led to setting up a poetry series, in cooperation with the English Language Center (ELC). Thanks to Dean Gui from the ELC, and watch for the announcement.

Sharing their work with other poem lovers is a gratifying experience for the participated poets.

Interview with Dominique Zhang Yang

(CDeC: Dr Christina DeCoursey Dom: Dominique)

CDeC: How did you become interested in writing poetry?

Dom: Well. It all started about two years ago when I was reading a book named *Literature: Reading, Reacting and Writing* by Kirszner and Mandel. It is basically like an introduction course where I read quite some free-verse, modern poems written by contemporary poets. I am sure you will understand the difficulty in writing in one's second language — the choice of words would always be a headache — you want to avoid clichés and want your poems to be readable still. However, since I have a passion for English literature in general, I decided that somehow I should get it started by trying to write something myself; I would not attempt high, but would generally jot down my thoughts when my emotions surges (I am capable of strong emotions at times :)) In addition, revising and editing your poems could be fun — I wrote dozens of them. And this was how I became interested in writing poetry.

CDeC: What are your favorite poems and why?

Dom: Well, T.S Eliot, Edgar Allen Poe and William Blake are my favorites. You know, mysticism, occultism and the like fascinates me immensely. And when they are infused into poems, it works like magic. Reading them on a sofa and pondering their meanings were the sort of enjoyment I had reading them.

CDeC: What is it like, writing poetry?

Dom: Art creation is never without some self-enjoyment. A raining day, a stray dog and a window through which you can watch the other people were all the inspirations I had when writing poems. People all have their special perception

of the environments around them; and when I was in a poetic mood, I feel things around me connected with my thoughts — let's say, I feel my thoughts are submerged in the surroundings. I am poems; my surroundings become poems — and the struggle would be to take a step aside, record your feelings and try hard to communicate your feelings in words.

CDeC: What did you think about the poetry reading evening with Shirley Lim on 16 December?

Dom: The poetry reading evening was fantastic. Yes, I have heard some audio recordings of those famous poems, but when I heard real poets standing in front of me, reading their own poems, revisiting their own thoughts/memories, I feel different. The subtle change of stress and intonation becomes instantly more perceptible when somebody is reading in front of you. Another great thing I came to realize was that since I did not see the text when I heard those nice people sharing their poems, I was literally traveling with their thoughts, guided by their feelings and I must be very careful not to sink into my own thoughts and miss the brilliant images that are always emerging. It is like watching a movie or many movies maybe.

In addition, Madam Shirley Lim wrote great poems indeed — it is almost convention wisdom that people, Chinese people at least, do not expect much fairy-land sort of beauty in poems dealing with routine life. It seems it always takes a fairy to write poems that are "refreshingly elegant". However, Madam Shirley Lim is capable of this "refreshing elegance", which I admired enormously — the speech poem, in particular, is spectacular in this regard. Speech is almost the order of the day in the academic realm, but it is nothing short of poetic properties in her poem. The strong emotions blended with a natural elegance made my day.

Hong Kong — an Ugly City (by Dominique Zhang)

In Hong Kong, they have red devil-like taxis
They never have an industry
They import cars transported from Germany and Japan
They have crazy drivers on the road, racing and drifting.

In Hong Kong, they have stick-like high risers
People there say they have two thirds of their land being
Unexploited and forest-covered
They work like ants and never have a decent place to live in

In Hong Kong, they speak a language hardly understood
By outsiders, like me

We call the language they speak a dialect, only a dialect
But they are proud of it!

In Hong Kong, they have Falun Gong demonstrators
Marking on Nathan Road
When the National Day comes
Dressing like zombies and making noises everywhere.

Hell, they have so much ugliness and the city is still
A developed one, a prosperous one!
I do not give a damn about politics, seriously
But why the hell I am from a Third World country!

Awards for Outstanding Teaching and Research

Congratulations to Professor Winnie Cheng and Dr Mable Chan who were awarded the Faculty Award under the President's Award Scheme 2010/11. Professor Cheng received the *Faculty Award for Outstanding Research and Scholarly (individual)* while Dr Chan received the *Faculty Award for Outstanding Teaching (individual)*. This is the second time Dr Chan has received this prestigious award (she was also the recipient of the Faculty Award for Outstanding Teaching 2004-2005).

The award presentation ceremony was held on 25 November 2011. Dr Chan's family, former students, teachers and friends joined the ceremony to share her happiness. Dr Mable Chan would like to thank Dr Stephen Evans who nominated her for the award, and Professor Christian Matthiessen, Professor Winnie Cheng, Professor Martin Warren, Dr Foongha Yap and Dora Wong for supporting her application.



Professor Winnie Cheng



Dr Mable Chan received a commendation letter and cheque from FH Dean Professor Huang Chu-ren



Dr Mable Chan and Irene So, a BALS graduate, Programme Coordinator, Centre of Languages and Communication, Hong Kong College of Technology.

Exploring Collaboration Opportunities with Local Institution

Dr Mable Chan was invited by the Centre of Languages and Communication (CLC) to the HKCT (Hong Kong College of Technology) cum ISCOPS Annual Luncheon 2011 on 13 December (Tue) 2011 held in the Royal Park Hotel. Hon. Tam Yiu Chung, GBS, JP, Chairperson of the Management Board, made a welcoming speech, which was followed by a seminar on the topic of *Higher Education Diversification and Outlook of Youths* made by Dr Wong Y.K. David, JP, President of the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong.

The Centre of Languages and Communication is going to introduce new full-time Diploma and Higher Diploma programmes in Language Studies and Communication (English as one of the streams) in 2012. Dr Chan was invited to be the external examiner of a number of language programmes offered by the Centre. A campus visit is arranged on 30 January 2012 (Monday) to discuss the details and possible collaboration plans.

Intensive Training Course for ESP Teachers at Chang'an University, Xi'an (12 – 16 December 2011)



A teaching team from the Department visited Xi'an, one of the four great Chinese ancient capitals, in December. Dr Gail Forey, Ms Angela Tse and Dr Marvin Lam delivered a 5-day intensive teacher-training programme to the professors from the School of Highway at Chang'an University, Xi'an. With a view to assisting the School with its transition to bilingual teaching in Highway Engineering, the training programme addressed the major needs of teaching/learning with English as

the second language for specific purpose at the tertiary level, including text analysis, teacher talk, assessment design, lesson planning and classroom management. The Chinese professors participated enthusiastically in various class activities and had inspiring in-class discussions with their peers. Each participant did some micro-teaching which was video-taped, this micro-teaching provided a great learning experience as it provided a forum for valuable comments from their co-workers in the debriefing sessions. The micro-teaching presentations on bridge building and road paving were real eye-openers for the PolyU teaching team!

Our Departmental members received fantastic hospitality from the Faculty members at Chang'an throughout the journey and the arrangements they made contributed overwhelmingly to a pleasant teaching experience. At night, they even ventured out and tried some local delicacies. The professors from Chang'an will be our guests in March, later in 2012 in order to do some classroom observations and as an initiative promoting academic exchange between members of our Department and the Faculty of Engineering. We look forward to reuniting with our Chinese counterparts!



Dr Gail Forey and Ms Angela Tse enjoy the local cuisine of Xi'an.

Mentorship Programme for 2011/12 Academic Year

The first activity of the programme in this academic year was organised on 9 December. Participants were arranged to sit in groups and had a chance to know each other briefly before the activity started. The core part of the programme was an understanding of job interviews. A video with real-life examples was shown which followed by discussions on tackling job interviews. Participated mentors shared lots of their personal experience and advice with the students which are very valuable to them.

