

...A Virtual Dialogue...

[with the Head of the Language and Literature Department – Faculty of Education]

written by: A. Santoso¹

“...I guess when we are studying in a university, we are constantly trained to reason, draw assumptions and make decisions, which we can then apply in our daily lives in order to see the meaning of life and thus we can behave accordingly. That’s truly the essence of education in its basic form. So, put differently: the heart of education is education of the heart, as some people might think of education that way. What do you think?...”

The following is a dialogue between the writer and the head of the Language and Literature Department, Pak Agus, as he is popularly referred to both by colleagues and students alike. The informal dialogue itself has specifically been conducted in commemoration of the National Education Day.

Based on the interview, first of all, we will be able to gain a lot of insights into the fundamental philosophy of how the Language and Literature Department has come into existence. Secondly, we will be introduced to its Vision and Mission and, eventually, we will find out more about its long-term plans as the new department is grappling with such challenging environments as: flourishing similar programs offered by other universities and burgeoning English courses in the surrounding areas.

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There were some lecturers having lunch in the function room when the interview was about to take place. Apparently, Pak Agus had just finished his lunch when the writer popped in.

Q: Good afternoon, Pak Agus. Do you mind if I ask you several questions?

A: No. Not at all. Go ahead.

Q: When was the Language and Literature Department offered at UPH for the first time?

A: It was offered for the first time in July 2002. About 3 years ago, I guess. We started from scratch. Well, it is still relatively new but we have got a very special program to offer. Trust me.

[A student comes into the function room in order to submit an assignment.]

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Q: How many credits does a student need to complete the program?

A: 144 credits. In the first 3 semesters, the students will deal with the skill courses, such as: Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking in order to improve their language skills.

Q: Sorry to interrupt, but what is the main difference between the program you run at UPH and the ones run by English courses, then?

A: In our program, the students are studying English as a science. Thus, they need to be more seriously exposed to the target language. Besides, they need to be able to justify why they have used certain tenses, for example. This is not easy, though. However, they should know how the system of the language works in order to become 'accountable' speakers. Ideally, they should not only know 'what to say' but also the 'how and why'. And then in the forthcoming semesters, the students will be dealing with the content courses, such as: Syntax, Semantics, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Literature, Broadcasting, Public Relations, Advertising, and so forth and so forth.

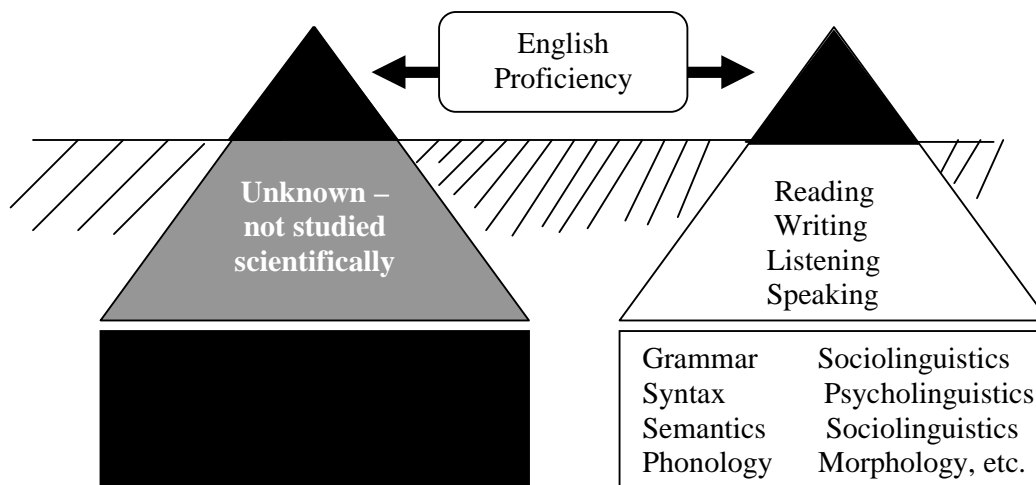
[A student comes into the function room to see Pak Markus to discuss a project.]

Q: Sorry to tell you the truth but it's quite difficult for me to digest...

A: Well, the students need to equip themselves with the necessary weapons before they move on to a higher level of studying English and eventually get ready to go to a real war. [Interrupted by a phone]... Excuse me... [..talking on the phone...]

Q: Mmmm... It's a bit philosophical but can you put it in another way?

A: It's like seeing the tips of the icebergs below. If you know what I mean...



Q: That's cool. Now, I know the differences. Thanks for trying to elaborate your explanations. I really appreciate your efforts.

A: No problem. And that makes our program so special, indeed.

Q: What is so special with it?

A: Although we are under the umbrella of the Faculty of Education, we won't only produce teachers... teachers... and teachers... Rather, we are trying to equip the students with some 'other' skills needed to improve themselves in areas where English is spoken as a medium of communication. Hopefully, after they have completed the program, they will be able to work in those different areas.

[A student comes into the function room and asks for permission to use the computer because she wants to search for on-line materials.]

Q: What do you mean by some 'other' skills?

A: Other skills means...being able to access information related to 'Public Relations' if they want to pursue careers as PR practitioners.... 'Advertising' if they want to get involved in Advertising agencies.... 'Broadcasting' if they are interested in working in front of cameras... 😊... etc...etc...It's really interesting in that the students are studying those subjects as 'ESP' and at the same time, they can acquire the background knowledge. It's then up to them to develop their own interests.

Q: Do you think they can compete with the market demands?

A: Why not? I have always been convinced that they can. To tell you the truth, I have a lot of friends whom we studied English together with when we were in college. At present, they are NOT TEACHING. In other words, their current professions are not in the educational world; yet, they have managed to compete with other people.

[It is very noisy in the front office. More and more students are coming in to see Ibu Yovita to have the own MID-TERM test results returned.]

Q: That's interesting! In what other areas are they now working, for instance?

A: Quite many, actually. Some are working in banks, foreign companies, NGO's, foreign embassies. Some have become famous translators, interpreters, and broadcasters... As for me, I am very consistent in that I have decided to become a teacher.. or a lecturer, to be more specific... 😊

[The phone is ringing but we don't really care because it is out of reach at the moment.]

Q: What is the secret to these 'inconsistencies'?

A: I guess when we are studying in a university, we are constantly trained to reason, draw assumptions and make decisions, which we can then apply in our daily lives in order to see the meaning of life and thus we can behave accordingly. That's truly the essence of education in its basic form. So, put differently: the heart of education is education of the heart, as some people might think of education that way. What do you think?

[The phone keeps ringing.]

Q: That's true. Oh, I almost forgot. What about its Vision and Mission?

A: We would like to provide better human resources and thus we contribute

something valuable to the betterment of English instruction in our country. We would like to start with ourselves. We would initially set good examples and then based on that we will try to expand the ripples by influencing our immediate environments. I would say we will become agents of change when it comes to teaching English. The ripples have already started with us here at UPH... Can you feel them?

[One by one, the lecturers are leaving the function room after finishing their lunch.]

Q: Wow, that's great. What are your long term plans, then?

A: We are trying as hard as we can to catch up with what is going on in our discipline. We are open to changes, as long as they mean progress. We are trying to recruit the best people available. You know, qualified human resources will mean a lot to make the whole organization operate properly. We need the right people behind the guns. UPH has got the guns already. We just need to find the right people! We are also trying to complete our best collections of textbooks in our library as they are our indispensable sources of knowledge that will never run dry.

Q: The right people behind the guns....tell us a bit about the teaching staff in your department?

A: Please visit our website on <http://edfipuph.blogspot.com> [which is still under construction... sorry for that...] to get to know with our teaching staff. They are all experts in their own fields. Besides, they come from different famous local and international universities, which will definitely enrich the academic atmosphere and community at UPH, I believe.

[Pak Agus picks up the phone that has been ringing for ages. Apparently, Pak Woen Liong is on the phone. He has just reminded pak Agus of the monthly meeting to be conducted on the 6th of April.]

Q: One final question...pak... What is your motto?

A: What an easy question to answer! Please visit the website above and find out about it yourself. Oh.. one more thing. If you can send it to me via asantoso@uph.edu before the end of May 2005, you will get a rewarding prize.... "PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED"[pointing to all of the rooms available in B543]... Sorry, anyway.... If there is more than one sender, I will draw lots to determine who the winner is... and I really mean it.

Q: What do you mean by "PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED"?

A: O well... it means all of the FIP teaching and administrative staff as seen on the web should not join in the 'competition' ... ☺...

Q: Oh, I see.... Well, it was really nice talking with you, Pak Agus. Thanks a lot for all of the information you have provided.

A: Any time. Oooops,... before you leave, can I ask you to pronounce one word? Just one word, please.

Q: Sure. What is it?

A: How would you produce 'which'?

Q:.. /hwuitch/ ... [Ignore the transcription.]

A: Perfect. Thank you. See you around.. [as he is leaving the table in the function room, going into his office.] I have to send an email to a friend of mine. Very urgent.

[A student comes into the function room to see Ibu Clara for a make-up quiz.]