**UJIAN AKHIR SEMESTER GENAP TAHUN AJARAN 2011-2012**

Matakuliah : Reading Comprehension IV

Kelas/Program/Semester : 10SI-1/S1/IV

Hari/Tanggal/Jam : Rabu, 27 Juni 2012/07.00 – 08.30 Wib

Ruangan : R4418

**Reading Text: The sixth sense**

‘I just knew that something awful was going to happen today!’ Yasuko said when she learned about Michelle’s accident. Abouzed asked her how she knew.

‘It was just a feeling I had. Like a warning dream.’ Yasuko believes that she has a hidden ‘sixth sense’. She also believes in things like astrology. When she first meets someone, she likes to ask them what their ‘sign’ is. When they say ‘Virgo’, or whatever it is, she says ‘Ah!’ in a most meaningful way, as if to say ‘*That* explains everything!’

Naturally she was eager to find out Miguel’s sign. He told her that it was Cancer. This confirmed her suspicion that, underneath, he was a loving and romantic person, and she told him so. He then admitted that he had been pulling her leg, and that his birthday was really in May. She was silent for a moment, and the said ‘Ah!’ again in that way of hers – meaning, no doubt, that a loving nature was also fairly typical of people born under the May sign of Taurus.

One day, out of the blue, she said to Abouzed, ‘You’ve secretly been worrying about something, haven’t you? As he was a cheerful person, the question was quite unexpected. ‘I keep getting a feeling,’ she went on, ‘that something terrible happened to you not long ago.’ He thought for a moment. Actually he *had* been rather concerned about his brother, who had been badly hurt in a road accident some months before. It was amazing. How could she know about that?

Julia was also impressed, and asked Yasuko if she took palmistry seriously. ‘Of course! Palmistry isn’t just a party game!’ she replied, in such a sharp tone that even Miguel felt obliged to take notice of what she was saying.

‘Come on, Yasuko,’ he said, ‘read my future in my hand.’

‘Please don’t joke about such things, Miguel,’ she said, even more solemnly.

‘I’m not joking,’ he said. ‘I bet I could tell, from your hand, something about your past, if not your future.’ He grabbed her hand before she could protest.

‘Hm, you’ve been doing a lot of writing lately, haven’t you? He observed. Yasuko, who was a great letter-writer, gasped.

‘How can you tell?’ she asked intrigued.

‘Because you’ve got ink all over your fingers!’ he replied. Julia burst out laughing, but Abouzed glared angrily at Miguel. He did not like to see anyone making fun of Yasuko. ‘You must forgive him.’ Julia broke in quickly. ‘He is only jealous because *he* can’t read palms like Yasuko.’

**Reading Text: A very puzzling situation!**

The whole world is going, or has already gone, mad. I do not say this because of problems like the arms race, pollution or the population explosion. These are bad enough, but I think we now have a more serious problem: our desire to make ourselves miserable by setting ourselves unnecessary problems, called *puzzles*. Dozens of magazines are published every month with names like *The Puzzler*, *Enigmatic*, and *Brain Teasers*. They contain problems which you can do without, and solutions which do not make you feel any better.

The electronics industry is now cashing in on our strange need to set ourselves difficult tasks. Their computer games are even nastier, because the torture (the pain they cause) is not only mental but also physical. Only a superman could possibly keep up with the fast-moving dots which represent space invaders, or whatever they are supposed to be.

Where does it all start, and why do we do it? It starts when our well-meaning parents try to amuse, amaze and puzzle us with games like ‘I-Spy’. Later the whole thing becomes more sinister, when these puzzles (like ‘Odd Man Out’ and the number series) are used as tests to see if we are clever enough or suitable for a particular course or job. And it ends on the bookstalls with those piles of puzzle magazines – usually with a pretty smiling girl on the front cover. (What is she smiling about? Why isn’t she as miserable as the rest of us?)

We have plenty of real problems to worry us, and yet we create artificial problems to enable us to be miserable in our spare time as well. Why all this misery? The reason is actually very simple: because of a huge cosmic mistake, *we have been put, by accident, on the wrong planet*. Out there somewhere, deep in space, is a beautiful planet where we *should* have been put, a much more peaceful place than ours, a place with no problems, either real or imagined. The sad thing is that it is probably inhabited by creatures who should have been put on Earth. I bet they have a thriving puzzle book industry too.

**Reading text: The old boy network**

‘It’s not *what* you know but *who* you know that counts.’ People who get on in life may be successful not because they deserve it, but because of influential friends or the right background. We say ‘Ah yes, he must have gone to the right school’, or ‘She must come from a good family.’ We may suspect that some people in positions of authority are there because they belong to the right group or party. To get something done – a signature on a document, or a quick decision – it helps to know someone ‘on the inside’. At least, this is the widespread belief.

It is a comforting belief too. If your boss strikes you as incompetent, it is tempting to believe that he only got the job because his father pulled some strings. If someone else gets the job which you should have had, well, the ‘old boy network’ must be operating. And yet, if we can get what we want by ‘having a word’ with so-and-so, or by getting so-and-so to put in a good word for us, which of us would not take advantage of the opportunity?

Often it is quite harmless. For instance, when Miguel went with Julia to visit Michelle in hospital, he bumped into someone he knew, a doctor who had been at medical school with his father. As a result of this chance meeting, Miguel was able to find out a great deal about Michelle’s condition. Julia was not only grateful to him for making use of his connection, but delighted that she was able to learn so much by this means which she might never have found out otherwise.

At the other extreme it can be very destructive. I once met a brilliant young engineer who worked in a chemical plant. Because of her knowledge and experience, she should have been promoted to Production Manager. Instead, the job went to a man who was totally unsuited for the post. Everyone knew that he only got it because he was politically acceptable to his superiors. This injustice demoralized the young engineer and many of her colleagues. It also meant that the factory was much less efficient than it could have been.

All the same, we should not be pessimistic. More and more, the modern world depends on having people who are in the job because they are good enough, not just because their face fits. There is a story of a factory owner who sent for an engineer to see to a machine which would not go. He examined it, then took out a hammer and tapped it, once. The machine started up immediately. When he presented his bill, the owner protested, ‘This can’t be right! £100 just for tapping a machine with a hammer?’ The engineer wrote out a new bill: ‘*For tapping a machine, £1; for knowing where to tap it, £99*.’

Maybe it is *what* you know that really counts, after all.