
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Second Semester Examination
Academic Session 2006/2007

April 2007

HEK 222 – CRITICAL READING AND WRITING

Duration : 3 hours

Please check that this examination paper consists of SEVEN pages of printed material before you begin the examination.

Answer ALL questions.

Equal marks are allocated to all questions.

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1. EITHER

Assess the following text on international students in higher education. You should pay particular attention to the following elements:

- [a] Purpose
- [b] Audience
- [c] Language
- [d] Tone
- [e] Style

Colleges and universities in this country appear to be full of international students. It could be argued that instead of coming here and taking places away from home students, international students should stay in their own countries.

The government has a policy of increasing the number of students in higher education. However, a survey of colleges and universities will reveal that the increase in numbers is made up of international rather than home students. Thus, it seems that instead of giving priority to increasing the number of home students, the higher education sector has given precedence to students from abroad. This would seem to be a misapplication of government policy.

In addition to taking up university places, international students compete for accommodation, making it difficult for home students to

find places to live. Furthermore, as most international students appear to be more affluent than home students, they can afford to pay higher prices for accommodation, thus inflating rental levels beyond the means of local students.

It could be asked what international students give in return for their time in this country. It appears that, having come here to study, they return to their home countries with new-found ideas which they then apply to their own commercial and industrial enterprises. Since they have cheap labour, they can out-price this country's products, so undermining the industrial sector. Thus, it appears that the beneficiaries of a policy of encouraging international students to study in this country are the foreigners themselves.

OR

Compare these two texts on the rise of divorce in society. Which explanation do you find the most convincing? You should pay particular attention to the arguments (if any) and use of rhetorical devices such as persuaders and emotive language.

[25 marks]

Text 1

Nicky Hart argues that the increasing divorce rate can be seen as a 'product of conflict between the changing economic system and its social and ideological superstructure (notably the family)'. In advanced capitalist industrial societies, there is an increasing demand for cheap female wage labour. Wives are encouraged to take up paid employment not only because of the demand for their services, but also because the capitalist controlled media has raised 'material aspirations' – the demand for goods that families desire. These material aspirations can only be satisfied by both spouses working as wage earners. However, conflict results from the contradiction between female wage labour and the normative expectations which surround married life. 'Working wives' are still expected to be primarily responsible for housework and raising children. In addition, they are still expected, to some degree, to play a subservient role to the male head of the household. These normative expectations contradict the wife's role as a wage earner since she is now sharing the economic burden with her husband. Conflict between the spouses can result from this contradiction, and conflict can lead to marital breakdown.

Haralambos, M. (1985) *Sociology. Themes and Perspectives*, 2nd edition, pp. 364-5 (London: Bell & Hyman).

Text 2

As laws and procedures regulating divorce have altered, the divorce rate has tended to increase by leaps and bounds; with each new piece of legislation making divorce more readily available, the rate has risen rapidly for a time before levelling off. Today there is one divorce in Britain for every three marriages. (In the USA the rate is one in two.) Many people have suggested that the higher divorce rates reflect an underlying increase in marital instability; the problem with this argument is that we have no way of knowing how many 'unstable' or 'unhappy' marriages existed before legislation made it possible to dissolve them in a public (and recordable) form. Some commentators have gone further, and argued that more permissive divorce laws in themselves *cause* marital breakdown. But we can certainly be sceptical of such a view, suggesting as it does that happily married couples can suddenly be persuaded to abandon their relationship, propelled by the attraction of a new divorce law. A more plausible explanation for rises in the divorce rate after the passage of a law is that unhappily married couples were for the first time given access to a legal solution to pre-existent marital problems; in other words, changes in divorce laws are less likely to cause marital breakdown than to provide new types of solution where breakdown has already occurred.

Bilton, T. et al. (1987) *Introductory Sociology*, 2nd edition, p. 301 (London: Macmillan).

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2. EITHER

It has been said that the SQ3R reading technique can be a useful way of approaching a text in a systematic and enquiring manner. Explain how a reader might apply SQ3R to a variety of reading tasks at different levels of complexity. You may use examples from the handouts provided in class to support your answer.

OR

Explain (at least 5 examples/ways) how a critical reader would be able to distinguish persuasion that takes place through the use of tricks or appeals to the emotions from persuasion that takes place through the offering of sound evidence and arguments for a belief. You may use the following text on "Enforcing Rules Means More Freedom" to support your answer.

[25 marks]

Enforcing Rules Means More Freedom

By Carol Hui

In a responsible society, laws should make sense to ordinary people; laws should be made clear; and laws should be strictly enforced. None of this happens in Japan.

Laws should make common sense. In Japan, possession of illegal drugs is a serious offense requiring jail time yet drunk driving is a fine unless you've injured someone. In North America, drunk driving is a far more serious crime than taking drugs. Taking drugs is self-destructive, but driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol can hurt innocent people. I think most people believe that harming others is a greater crime than hurting your own self, yet Japanese laws don't reflect this belief.

Two recent cases of corporate crime in Japan are given very different legal treatment. A construction company and an architect falsified documents that reduced costs and rendered buildings to collapse during earthquakes over 5 on the Rector scale. Their scam endangered the lives of those who bought the condos. Yet the issue seems to revolve around who pays how much compensation.

Conversely, the executives of Livedoor are spending months at the Tokyo Detention Center for interrogations into alleged securities frauds. They too falsified documents for their own profit, but

their action never endangered lives. Yet they are being harshly prosecuted.

Second, all laws and punishment must be clearly stated. Near my children's school, there is one street if you park on it for more than 10 minutes, you will get towed, a big fine, and two points off your driving record. But if you park on one street further, all you will get is a sticker warning. There are no signs differentiating the penalties.

In Canada, there are street signs clearly indicating parking regulations. On one street, the sign will read "Commercial vehicles parking 15-minutes limit," while the next block will have a "Parking without permit will result in immediate towing." In Canada, my brother once got a parking ticket but he disputed in court and did not have to pay it. He provided photos showing that tree branches had partially covered the no parking sign. Because it was not clearly indicated, a judge dismissed his violation. In Western society, people are good at protesting, and, therefore, laws have to be fair.

Another legal difference between Canada and Japan is how strictly laws are enforced. The legal drinking age in the province of British Columbia is 19. Nightclubs found serving alcohol to those under age get their liquor license revoked after one official warning. Establishments found breaking laws concerning safety,

disabled accessibility and pollution control also get their business shut down if changes are not made immediately. In Japan, no one takes warnings seriously. The owner of the business hotel chain Toyoko Inn had violated handicap accessibility regulations in the past but continued doing so because he never faced penalties.

Not enforcing rules leads to social breakdown. There still exists this ideal in Japan that people should just behave well from the goodness of their heart. My mother-in-law and my children's preschool teacher are shocked at how strictly I enforce even simple rules. They are also surprised at how much my children still adore me despite my rules. Teaching them what the limits are results in being able to give them more freedom. My ideal is to encourage them to have fun and be creative within the boundaries of good social behavior.

Rules give people boundaries and they can be innovative within those borders. An American investment banker once explained to me that security law in the U.S. is a solid brick wall. "You can do all sorts of fancy maneuvers next to the wall, but you never cross over." Livedoor did Western-style fancy footwork such as stock swapping or dividing stocks which are legal and common elsewhere but unheard of in Japan. Like my children, if Livedoor executives had known that penalties would be stiff, they may have just continued dancing around the border instead of crossing over it. I hope that Japan abandons its "people should just know better" mentality and realize that strictly enforcing all laws is better for society. ■

Carol Hui is a freelance writer based in Tokyo. She specializes in topics on lifestyle changes in contemporary Japan.

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3. The "Questioning the Author" (Beck, 1997) approach has been claimed to be an effective approach to get readers to become actively involved as they read.

Do you agree or disagree? You may use the following text on "Internet" to support your answer.

[25 marks]

- 1 Describing the Internet is like describing a city: you can talk about the landscape, the streets, the stores, the government, the people, the weather, or a combination of all of them. The Internet is confusing for many computer users because it is different from anything they are used to. It's not a program, it's not a piece of hardware, it's not software, it's not even a system. Instead, it's a place where you can get information, make information available (for free or for sale), and where you can meet people. 5
- 2 Essentially, the Internet is a network of computers that offer access to people and information. Millions of people use the Internet, and the numbers are expected to increase ten-fold within a few years. To use the Internet, you run many different programs depending on the type of information you wish to view. For example, you might use one program for mail, another program for retrieving files, and yet a third for playing fantasy games with many people at once. The kind of information freely available includes government documents, scientific data, hobbyist lists, business and personal advertising, databases, and much more. 10
- 3 People from all over the world can access the Internet, and more than 10 million do so daily. Most of these people use only one feature of the Internet—mail—but many also use additional features. The term *mail* is used here to refer to what many call *electronic mail* or *e-mail* because all mail on the Internet is electronic. On the Internet, paper-based mail is often called *snail mail* to contrast it with the swiftness of Internet mail. 15
- 4 Even though the Internet is nebulous and indistinct, its value is easy to see. If you are 'on' the Internet, you can communicate with anyone else on the Internet quickly and easily. Almost anything you can do through the regular mail system or on the telephone can also be done on the Internet. 20
- 5 As you can imagine, with such a wide range of types of communications, the range of people who use the Internet is also diverse. Some corporations use the Internet for all of their important in-company communications; many also provide information to their customers on the Internet. An increasing number of state government agencies is publishing general information on the Internet. Almost every major university in a country uses the Internet for academic communications. 25
- 6 Besides the business and educational uses of the Internet, there are many exciting features for the individual user. Millions of people use the Internet only for social and general interest purposes. The entertainment interest groups are usually the most active, and they generate much more interest than the interest groups related strictly to business. 30
- 7 The Internet is open to anyone who can use a computer and a modem and can call into a computer that is on the Internet. At many universities and companies, the entire network at the location is connected to the Internet. Most people, however, access the Internet from their own computers through modems. 35

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4. Using the "Problem Posing" or "Alternative Texts" approach (Rosenblatt, 2002), evaluate the following letter on "Rethink Education System."

[25 marks]

Rethink education system

As we now relax during the school holidays, I cannot help but wonder whether we have achieved our national education philosophy. The UPSR results came out last month, and we all have read about the Education Ministry claiming that this year's overall result is one of the best ever.

But have we really succeeded in nurturing brilliant minds? Much has taken place this year in the education sector, and I think it is wise for us to rethink our education system.

This year all of us were shocked by the spate of gangsterism in schools. What is worrying is that most of these cases took place in boarding schools where students are handpicked. So, what is the cause of all this indiscipline?

Well, I believe that incidents of students getting out of hand have to do with the lack of caning, as a form of discipline, in schools. Also, the fact that most teachers nowadays are women, who do not instil fear in students.

Whatever happened to the good old days when students were "terrified" of their teachers? The question of disrespect did not even exist then. Those were the days when the mere sight of a stern-looking male teacher holding a cane would make students shudder.

Another problem with our education system is that it is too exam-oriented. Success in school is measured by a student's exam results. A student's ability to think creatively and innovatively is not considered. Students' true ability should not be based on computer data.

If this situation persists, we will not be able to produce an Einstein

or Churchill, let alone see a Malaysian win a Nobel prize. As our education system does not encourage creative and innovative thinking, all a student has to do is try to guess correctly what questions would come out in an exam, rather than use their knowledge creatively.

This results in one-way, unilateral thinking. For example, if a teacher were to twist a question, a student may not be able to answer it. We would also indirectly spawn a closed-minded and uncreative community that will affect the country's work ethic.

To overcome this problem, we should adopt the "Look East" policy. In countries like Japan and South Korea, the education system is based on specialisations, unlike in Malaysia where emphasis is on capacity.

For example, the average Form Four student in Malaysia is forced to take at least nine subjects, whereas students in Japan can choose their stream at the age of 14.

This enables students in Japan to specialise in their preferred fields, thus giving birth to specialists in many fields. The system eliminates peer pressure while promoting creativity and innovative thinking among students.

Both Japan and South Korea have produced world-class scientists and innovators. Each year, Japan creates

an average of 300 new products (patents) in the field of science and technology, compared to Malaysia's average of one patent per year. Hence, Japan has dominated the world's automotive, electronic and home entertainment market through its giant corporations.

Malaysia's education system is actually based on the old British education system, which even the British themselves are not practising anymore. Nowadays both the British and the Americans are gearing towards a more innovative and creative approach in teaching their students. For example, they are encouraging students to come up with ideas and opinions through group discussions and class debates. A student's achievement is based 50% on exam results and 50% on practical application of knowledge and his ability to understand and carry out experiments.

We must pay a lot of attention to our younger generation, who will be tomorrow's leaders. I know that this may sound a bit radical or drastic, but I think it is high time for us to reconsider our education system.

If you don't agree with me, try asking students themselves or your own children, whether they think our education system should be revamped.

ASHRAFF SANUSI
Ipoh, Perak.

