

Speech by Prof Dhanjay Jhurry on the occasion of the Launching of the Digital Language Lab

Dr J C Autrey, Chancellor
Prof Carpooran, Dean of Faculty SSH
Mr Rajnish Hawabhai, CTO MTCI
Pro-VCs/Deans
Distinguished Guests
Dear Colleagues and Students
Ladies and Gentlemen

In 1959, 59 years ago, C P Snow delivered that year's Rede Lecture in Cambridge entitled "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution", and his theme was the dangerously wide gap that had opened up between scientists and "literary intellectuals". Snow argued that practitioners in both areas should build bridges, to further the progress of human knowledge and to benefit society.

This had led to intense debate over the past 59 years. The idea of separating academic disciplines into groups known as science and humanities was no older than the 19th century. The term "scientist" was only coined in 1833, and it was not until 1882 that another Rede Lecturer, Matthew Arnold, discussed – under the title of "Literature and Science" – whether or not a classical education was still relevant in an age of great scientific and technical advance.

With the New Economy and the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a main driver of growth, came the digital divide, a term that refers to the gaps in access to ICT – which threatens the ICT 'have-nots', whether individuals, groups or entire countries. The risk for some of being disconnected through being unable to participate in the modern economy is now acute.

We could even now speak of the three Cultures

But with the Digital Language Lab, I think we are bringing in a way the 3 cultures together. Learning the languages in a scientific manner with the help of technology and the use of multimedia resources. This should allow

allow students to improve their spoken and written skills and/or learn foreign languages which are not familiar to them.

I am told the idea of setting up a DLL at UoM goes back to as far as 1990's. We take pride of materializing this idea by putting the necessary funds for the setting-up of the DLL, not that we had more money last year but we are prioritizing our actions and probably managing our funds in a more efficient manner. Funding is one but we also need champions. I would like here to commend the PVC (P&R) for his full support to this project and to the Dean of Faculty and his team who has spared no efforts to make this DLL a reality.

I will not dwell into all the benefits of the DLL to enhancing language skills of students, and their employability, promoting multilingualism and enhancing the learning environment. In a week's time, we will be reviewed for our 3rd Quality Audit and ways and means we promote students' learning experience. That's a good point for the UoM. For the academic year 2018-2019, some 200 students will be initiated with the Rosetta Stone Project through the DLL.

I also believe we should not limit the use of the DLL to our students and also extend it to the community. Could we think of a project where we enhance the learning skills of the primary school students who have difficulty in learning English and French.

I cannot conclude without mentioning that in 1959 when C P Snow gave his lecture, another great scientist and Nobel Laureate Richard Feynmann gave a lecture entitled "'There's Plenty of Room at the Bottom: An Invitation to Enter a New Field of Physics" at the American Physical Society meeting and that marked the beginning of nanosciences. It was very exciting to live in those years of intense intellectual thinking.

In conclusion I would remind you of the notion that human beings are capable of moving from barbarism to civilisation by using their intellectual and moral capacities – and that is an idea which ought to unite scientists and literary intellectuals alike.

D. Jhurry

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