

Idiom by Lon Yan

一知半解

yi4 zhi1 ban4 jie3

The oath-taking farce at the lawmaking body has led some to suggest that we do not let local young people to discuss or take part in politics. But former Legislative Council president Jasper sang Yok-sing disagreed.

In a blog posting, he wrote that the problem lies in ignorance and disregard of facts.

He observed that liberal studies teaches students to think independently and critically. But some have taken this to mean thinking in a way that ignores reasons and facts, and closes one's ears to any contrary views.

The danger, he suggested, is in “一知半解” (*yi4 zhi1 ban4 jie3*), and forming opinions in a state of “糊裡糊塗” (*hu2 li3 hu2 tu2*), like some British people googling Brexit only after voting in the referendum.

“一” (*yi4*) is “one,” “知” (*zhi1*) “to know,” “to

be aware of,” “knowledge,” “半” (*ban4*) “half,” “partly,” “halfway” and “解” (*jie3*) “to solve,” “to explain,” “to understand.” Literally, “一知半解” (*yi4 zhi1 ban4 jie3*) is “one know, half understand,” “to know one and understand half.”

It means “to have a smattering (略知) of knowledge,” “to have scanty (不足的; 缺乏的) knowledge,” “incomplete comprehension,” “half knowledge.”

“糊裡糊塗” (*hu2 li3 hu2 tu2*) is “muddle-headed”. And “一知半解” (*yi4 zhi1 ban4 jie3*) is the problem identified in the saying “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.”

We should encourage young people to pay attention to current affairs so they will not be “一知半解” (*yi4 zhi1 ban4 jie3*) on important issues of the day.

Terms containing the character “解” (*jie3*) include:

解決 (*jie3 jue2*) – to settle; to resolve

解釋 (*jie3 shi4*) – to explain

解雇 (*jie3 gu4*) – to lay off

解剖 (*jie3 pou1*) – to dissect