

## THE CULI ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES READING COURSE

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The English for Academic Purposes Reading material (EAPR) currently being developed at Chulalongkorn University Language Institute will, in the first instance, offer second-year students from a number of faculties of this university approximately 40 hours of work during their first semester. Each student will study ten units of material, divided into two books. The first, 'core', book will contain reading material whose subject-matter is of general academic interest. The reading material in the second book will be of greater relevance to the student's particular field of study. A total of 30 or so units, now in various stages of completion, will, in different permutations, serve all the nine faculties which have adopted the course. Twenty-four of these units have already been piloted, and are now in an advanced stage of revision. The course will be published in photolithographic form.

Entry into this course will be dependent upon a successful completion of the Foundation English course. Completion of the EAPR course will, in its turn, be a prerequisite for entry into the EAP Writing course in the second semester.

EAPR is intended to consolidate and develop the reading skills introduced in the first year course by exposing the student, and making him respond actively, to authentic expository or argumentative prose. Each unit consists of approximately twelve texts—in many cases sequential—which bear upon a theme or a set of issues of academic interest. Each text (of one or two paragraphs) is accompanied by tasks and activities pertaining to features of written English at a variety of levels. Unlike the Foundation course, whose texts were composed or selected in order to illustrate particular teaching points, the texts in EAPR are the starting point, and it is they that determine the nature of the tasks and activities which the student is asked to do. In other words, the approach is pragmatic—features of written English discourse are handled as and when they arise in the texts. Clearly, then, EAPR is structured rather differently from the first-year course. The pragmatic approach limits the possibility of selecting and grading the material over the course as a whole. However, care has been taken to give the broadest possible coverage to relevant aspects of text organization and the grammar of discourse, as exemplified in academic prose.

The intention is that, after working through the requisite ten units, the student will have added to his vocabulary, and become familiar with a sufficient number of strategies to enable him to approach his future English reading with more independence and greater confidence, and to be able to extract information relevant to his academic needs with greater efficiency.

The pragmatic approach has allowed a great deal of flexibility to be built into the material. In the first place, each unit has been constructed as a 'module' – self-contained and presupposing no acquaintance with any other unit. Although the material will, in the first instance, form a first-semester, second-year course, its modular nature does mean that the material as a whole can be independent of the requirement of any particular course; it is adaptable, and can be profitably used in varying quantities and sequences according to the interests of students, and the amount of time available to them. Secondly, the material is presented in such a way as to permit a variety of pedagogical approaches, ranging from teacher-direction to individualized self-study. It is envisaged that this variety will be reflected in any typical classroom situation, with all students working at their own pace, some ahead, using the teacher simply as a resource person, others proceeding in a lock-step, teacher-directed fashion, at the teacher's discretion.

To facilitate the individualized mode of use, explicit reading guidance is given for each text, rubrics are formulaic and highly structured, and all tasks are answer-keyed. Moreover, use has been made of Thai for the purposes of glossing and occasional explanation. These features will enhance the independence of the more able students who wish to direct their own study.

In the further interests of clarity and explicitness, each unit has been divided into four sections. In each section, a different aspect of text is emphasised, as the following analysis illustrates.

Section I concentrates on the word level. There are two texts, in each of which the student focuses on a number of polysemous items, the appropriate sense of which he must deduce from the context. He responds to a binary choice. In addition, he is given practice in scanning, and is normally required to do one or two comprehension tasks of a factual nature. Between 30 and 50 useful vocabulary items, selected from the unit as a whole, are listed in Section I alongside their Thai glosses, and the student is expected to commit these to memory. Finally, a page of work is devoted to the deduction of word meaning from contextual clues. Here, the student is not presented with a binary choice; rather, he is asked to work out as much meaning as he can for words with which he is assumed to be unfamiliar, using the contextual clues pointed out to him, and then to attempt a translation into Thai. The student is not expected to achieve a 100 per cent correct deduction of the meaning of these

problem words; in most cases a minimal meaning should allow him to make sense of the texts in which they occur later in the unit.

Sections II and III concentrate on the level of discourse and its grammar. The student attends to the construction of sentences and the function of words, lexical and grammatical, within them; to the relationships between sentences in the form of cohesive devices and markers of logical connection; and to rhetorical signals such as those of exemplification and contrast. He is also given practice in inferring sentential relationships in the absence of explicit signals. In addition, he is shown how paragraphs can be organised, and how he can predict the development of a paragraph, and the information in it. The tasks involve such activities as searching, matching, sentence-completion, sentence-transformation, and responding to true/false-type statements. Lengthy written responses are kept to a minimum, though at no time is the student allowed to 'drift' over stretches of text.

In Section IV the student gets practice in reading for meaning and information; his attention is focused upon the content of texts rather than upon their structure. He is asked to make notes and summaries, relate texts to tables and diagrams, make inferences, and think critically about what is written.

A testing programme was piloted alongside the first draft, and an acceptable test formula now appears to have been established. The finalized version of EAPR will be tested in two stages, i.e., at the end of each five-unit book. Each test will count for 50% of the final total.

The traditional pattern of reading courses consists essentially of a long reading passage, followed by 'comprehension, questions whose effect, if not aim is merely to test the reader on things he has not been taught. EAPR is not cast in this mould. It presents a number of macro-texts in assimilable stretches of micro-text, and gives the student guidance in how to tackle them; it anticipates potential problems before the act of reading, and follows them up afterwards: it ensures that the student is constantly active while reading; the explanatory answer keys provide feedback, and they are intended to act as a teaching device rather than as a mere check on whether the student is right or wrong; it provides reading strategies which have both particular and general applicability; it attempts to show where information can be found, what information is crucial, what of peripheral importance; above all, it attempts to foster an independent, critical attitude of mind.

Below is a list of the principal features of discourse handled in the first half of EAPR.

Sequence: chronological and textual

Modality: writer's truth assessment and comments

Cause - Result / Consequence

Comparison  
Restatement : word and clause  
Implication / Presupposition  
Concession - Contrast  
Contrast , adversative and qualifying  
Proportion  
Assertion - Reason / Justification  
Condition  
Cohesion : anaphora, ellipsis, reiteration  
Summary  
Addition  
Exemplification  
Statements : general and particular  
Reference : generic and specific  
Information Distribution : prominence, given / new, punctuation  
Information : restrictive and non-restrictive