

INTRODUCTION

In 1974, CIEL (Central Institute of English Language) held a Conference in Chiangmai on English for Specific Purposes, with the active support of the British Council. This Conference was arranged because it was widely felt that a new approach should be made to the problem of students at tertiary level who need English to help them pursue their studies. The Conference dealt with techniques for teaching English for study purposes and attendant administrative reorganization, the teacher training necessary to implement the new methodology, and evaluation procedures.

Since that time there have been many developments in the field, and a great increase in the number of institutions developing materials specifically for this kind of English teaching.

Accordingly it was felt that a National Conference on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) would provide a valuable opportunity for practitioners and interested observers to get together, exchange ideas and set up channels of communication for future seminars and workshops.

The British Council and Chulalongkorn University Language Institute co-sponsored the National Conference in EAP from April 24-26, 1978, and the Conference was held at the Chulalongkorn University Information Centre. Invitations were sent out to all universities and other major tertiary level institutions and relevant government departments to read a paper if they wished.

In the event, papers were read by lecturers from Chiangmai, Chulalongkorn, Mahidol and Silpakorn Universities, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, the Asian Institute of Technology and the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation. An international flavour was added by papers from the Regional Language Centre, Singapore, and the British Council, Madras, India.

About 170 participants and observers attended the Conference, from government departments, and educational institutions all over Thailand.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Conference was the amount of teaching materials presented by the speakers to supplement and exemplify their papers. This ensured that all participants were fully able to appreciate the nature of the work being done, and that they carried away with them a tangible record of the Conference.

This edition of *Pasaa* is devoted to the paper presented at the Conference. All the papers have been revised and shortened for reasons of space.

During the questions and subsequent discussions after each paper, a number of topics were touched on. Many people were concerned about the standard of English in secondary schools, and with how the schools could help to prepare their students to study academic subjects in English. There was some confusion about the terminology in current EAP development, not only amongst the participants but also the speakers. Most of the speakers were using a functional-notional approach to their work, but the validity of this was often criticized. Not all participants felt that focussing on meaning at the expense of form at a relatively early stage provided the strongest base for development.

Turning to the materials in EAP courses, there was discussion on how much the students' attention should be directed to conscious language analysis of the materials. The subject matter raised some questions. Many believed it should be authentic, drawn from the relevant field, but others preferred either to adapt according to their theoretical and pedagogical approach or write specially designed passages.

There was considerable uncertainty as to how EAP courses could be tested, and, from a wider perspective, how to evaluate the courses, materials, and teachers, especially in the light of student's observed needs.

Opinions varied on the use of Thai in the classroom, and the minimum acceptable level of pronunciation.

Looking towards the future, it was hoped that other conferences and seminars would take place, though there was some dispute as to their form: for example whether they should consist of papers followed by discussion, or of workshop sessions. It was widely felt that further coordination and information exchange should take place, and it was hoped that CULI would be able to take on an increasingly national role to fulfil this aim.