

NEWS

Foundation English Progress Report

Work on the preparation of the new first-year English reading course continues to progress. The first draft version of the course is at present being piloted with 1200 first-year students from three faculties and the writers are receiving valuable feedback from the staff and students participating in the pilot. On the basis of this feedback work has now begun on rewriting the course in preparation for CULI's first full year of operations, beginning in June 1979.

Arrival of the Second ODM-funded Specialist in Teaching & Testing Materials

In early July Mr. Ian Pearson began at CULI, his first task being to help the Institute plan and prepare EAP reading courses that will follow on from the Foundation English course, the first draft of which has already been piloted.

CULI'S EAP Workshop : 10, 11, 28, 29, 30 August, 1978.

This Workshop was a preliminary stage in the writing of a one-semester Reading Course that can be used for second-year students in the faculties of Architecture, Commerce, Economics, Education, Communication Arts, and Political Science (hence EAP and not ESP).

During the first two days, there were two themes: first, the question of what is involved in successful reading, and hence of what aims we might have in our course, and secondly, what kinds of tasks we might wish to attach to the texts in the course, in terms of their mechanism and their purpose. At the end of these two days, various points emerged. Some were tentative conclusions:

- (a) we can distinguish between tasks which merely test and those which offer help to the struggling reader;
- (b) the help given to the reader may be "local" and relate only to the given text, or it may attend to generalizable strategies of reading;
- (c) a unit or block of reading can be unified or coherent either in terms of subject matter or language work; and
- (d) we will need to pay full attention to the language needs of the students (in the way of vocabulary and syntax problems), as well as to their "higher-order" reading weaknesses.

Other points were more in the form of questions that we needed to continue to think about and discuss:

- (e) what should we take as the base-line for our syllabus? (Given that we need to handle lexis; syntax, and the meaning of discourse, and in the light of the fact that the students have already followed a structurally-based school course and the CULI Foundation Course, which is organized in a mixture of structural and functional-cum-notional terms.)
- (f) in what ways might we prepare the students to read a given text? (In the light of the view that successful reading is a "thinking process" in which the reader "interacts" with the text, all the time anticipating and relating to meaning.)
- (g) what, if any, should be the connections between texts?
- (h) how and when should explanations be built in to the course, and might they be at least in part in Thai?
- (i) if, as with the Foundation Course, the EAP Reading Course must be planned as a self-study, individually-paced, course, and not as a taught, lock-step course, how can we decide when to help the student and what form the help should take?

In the last three days of the Workshop, there was study and discussion of course materials and syllabuses developed elsewhere which seem to have tried to meet problems similar to our own. This led to the drawing up of two master-lists: (1) of the various purposes that tasks for the students in a reading course such as ours should seek to further; and (2) of the various types of task that could be used to satisfy these ends. However, various unanswered questions remained:

- (j) to what extent and for what purposes might we use Thai? (We had read and discussed Laufer's claim, in *System*, Vol. 6, Jan. 78 that writing tasks in an English reading course would profitably be in the mother-tongue.)
- (k) what should be the subject-matter of the texts in our course?
- (l) how could the difficulty of texts be assessed, and should we be prepared to simplify or doctor them?
- (m) what feedback devices (both for learner and teacher) should be built in?
- (n) how should we handle the potentially great problem of vocabulary weaknesses among students?

It was, however, agreed that the base-line for the syllabus should be functional/notional. In continuing discussions during September, it was further agreed that:

- (o) the course be organized as a series of topics or units, each lasting 3-5 lessons, each to be coherent and complete in terms of subject-matter:
- (p) the texts should be chosen first, and then related to the list of functions/notions that form the contents of the syllabus base-line;

- (q) Thai should be used in rubrics and explanations if English would at particular points be potentially more a hindrance than a help to the students;
- (r) Thai could profitably be used to handle some of problems of unknown/difficult lexis;
- (s) the texts in the course should be academic prose taken from areas related to or of some relevance to the main studies of our students; and
- (t) the tasks we set the students should as far as possible reflect real-life reading activity, and should give the students a feeling of achievement, a feeling that they have got some clear profit from their work in the way of mastery of ideas or arguments, or as the basis for producing notes in their own language on the topic or solving problems using the ideas and information they have been reading about.

CULI'S T.E.L.L. IV Workshop

From 20 June-7 July 1978, the Research, Training and Information Division of the Chulalongkorn University Language Institute held a three-week workshop on Language Program Evaluation entitled T.E.L.L. IV Workshop. Dr. Richard B. Noss of the Regional Language Center (RELC) in Singapore and Dr. Lyle F. Bachman of Illinois University were invited to jointly conduct the workshop. There were thirty-two participants coming from various universities and teachers' training colleges in Thailand as well as from the supervisory units of the Ministry of Education in Bangkok. The workshop consisted of lectures and discussions in the morning and practicum in the afternoon. The topics covered were as follows: evaluation and evaluation research, evaluation and program development, purposes and types of evaluation, decision alternatives, needs assessment, performance objectives, evaluation of objectives, evaluation of implementability, field-testing and evaluation, evaluation designs, data collection, data analysis and implementation of evaluation. An evaluation of the long-ranged effects of T.E.L.L. IV Workshop will be performed in June 1979.