

CLASSES CLASSIFIED INTO FOUR LEVELS FOR TEACHING AND TESTING FRESHMAN ENGLISH

Since last school year (2002), students taking “Freshman English” course have been separated into various levels according to their score on the English section of the Joint Entrance Exam. And their achievement in learning English will be examined twice—once each semester. To continue the project of raising the English language ability of students, new methods compatible to the ability-classification criteria have been adopted for this school year (2003).

After several meetings of the “Freshman English Course Coordination Committee” held by the English Department, it was decided that students would be classified into four ability levels with different teaching materials compatible to diverse ability, and that the achievement tests would be based on their respective teaching materials.

In the previous school year, some complaints about the diverse ability levels had called attention to reconsider the teaching methodology and materials. For example, a student from the Advanced Level complained that his grade was lower than those of his classmates who took the English Course in the Low Basic level. On the other hand, another student from the Low Basic level felt confused and dissatisfied with the fact that their testing questions were more difficult than those for the Advanced level. After serious discussion on these matters, a consensus which matched the accustomed grading practice was reached—teachers should grade both students’ achievement and performance in class—which means students in the Advanced Level should not expect only a high grade if they perform poorly in class, whereas students in the Low Basic Level could get a high grade if they do well in class over the whole semester. Hence, for this school year, diverse teaching materials have been chosen. The school-round

English Ability Test will consequently be based on the chosen texts for each level.

The English Ability Test will continue to be held for this school year—once each semester—to survey both the student achievement and the efficacy of the new teaching policies. The first English Ability Test is scheduled to be held in the Mid-Term Exam week of this semester.

Professor Yung-yu Huang, coordinator of Freshman English Course Committee, English Department, remarked that the new practices following the criterion of “teaching according to student ability” are more realistic. He reasoned that the new teaching materials which are more updated and go with the new World cultures than the old textbook, From Culture to Culture, will raise student interest in learning and fit the diverse needs at the different levels. The examinations based on different ability levels and teaching materials will be fairer to students, and the evaluation of the teaching, based on the analysis of the English Ability Test, will be more accurate.

However, the teachers will encounter more challenges owing to the new policies. They have to prepare for one or more than one textbook—since according to drawing of lots, some teachers may have to teach students from more than one level.

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