

ELI Library Skills

An Evaluation of a CCH Spring Class

by Betty Crethar

During the second block session of the English Language Institute at the Church College of Hawaii, it was decided that a dictionary-library skills class would be offered for the 104 advanced level students. The objectives of this course were to increase vocabulary and to develop classification-abbreviation skills and general interest in books as tools for learning. Many of our students come from the Greater Pacific Basin areas where libraries and sometimes books are non-existent.

The course objectives were well presented in material prepared by Helen Moffat, director of the Woolley Library. Mrs. Moffat's well formulated material is in the form of lectures; slides and transparencies are also used as reinforcement aids. Also included in the material are worksheets and quizzes, which are excellent follow-up aids to the lessons.

Since the foreign students I was working with were not yet able to follow and absorb new and detailed information at a teacher-lecture level, I used the material from the lectures basically as an introduction to the worksheet lessons. To use a library as a tool and resource center requires a new terminology to be learned--the vocabulary and language of a library. With this in mind the first assignment required the students to learn the meanings and the spelling of approximately twenty basic words commonly associated with books and libraries such as bibliography, copyright, preface, glossary, appendix, etc. With this basic vocabulary as the first objective, the following lessons, which concentrated on the parts of a book, were made concrete. The results were very gratifying, in that the students seemed involved in the excitement of discovery. They seemed to realize that when they understood these words, they

would have a language vocabulary to draw upon when they visited the library.

My class was small enough (16 students) to take to the library for immediate reinforcement work. The group pulled books off the shelves and, identified the appendix, glossary, table of contents, etc. The results showed excellent retention of material learned and a motivated interest.

Mrs. Moffat's material was extremely clear, understandable, and very adaptable for foreign students. I showed the transparencies and through a class-discovery approach situation we "learned" the different areas of the library. This

Betty M. Crethar is an instructor in the TESL program at CCH. She is also teaching in the college Adult Education program.

methodology was used as we discovered the card catalog, the shelving under the Library of Congress system of classification, the periodical indexes, the reference book shelves, and the microfilm room and its indexes. With each new area in the library discovered, explored and learned, I first presented the material in the classroom and then together we went to the library to "see, feel, smell, and maybe even taste" the material, so that concrete knowledge was built upon the already sound and workable foundation of previously learned information.

I found that through this teaching methodology I could sense when my students were getting near a frustration level within the class, and that

instantaneous revival took place when they were told that we would now meet at a designated section of the library for a review evaluation.

The attitude of these students towards the microfilm machines was interesting. Since most of the class came from a culture and background where "machines" are not a common tool or aid the introduction to the "big gray boxes" called the microfilm machines was a traumatic experience for some of them. One assignment required that each student look up his home country in the New York Times Index and write the call numbers on a slip of paper for the lab assistant to use in procuring the information. The idea of using a machine to read a newspaper was a difficult experience for some students. I explained to the group that many future libraries would be only microfilm libraries and that the ability to

handle these machines would be advantageous to them. I found it necessary to work individually with these students in order to build up confidence in handling this important library area. (This was a most interesting and yet quite understandable sidelight to the teaching of library skills to Pacific Basin students).

At the end of this block I concluded that a Library-skills course has great merit within the curriculum on an English as a Second Language Institute program-especially when the students are preparing for college work. In such a class students can see a practical application in the learning of English structure, vocabulary, and reading skills, by putting this knowledge to work. My role as instructor was made much more rewarding by the availability of Mrs. Moffat's fine material and the proximity of my class to the library.