

Report on Second Annual

YEAR OF COMPOSITION WORKSHOP

by Greg Larkin

As one department chairman summed it up, the quality of the presentations at the second annual composition workshop was the "highest of any workshop on writing I've ever attended."

Without exception, workshop sessions were very well prepared, were longer than last year, and involved considerably more audience participation.

Those who attended went away with very valuable information and practical strategies for teaching and reinforcing composition, which they are adding to their existing programs.

The tone was set on Friday morning, as Larry Smith of the East-West Culture Learning Institute set composition instruction into the framework of English as an International Auxiliary Language. Particularly for ESL teachers, this presentation afforded instructors in writing an overall framework and rationale that goes beyond the day-to-day classroom considerations. Students need to learn to write English for more reasons than to pass English writing classes.

Friday morning continued as Hector Nevarez of the Defense Language Institute and Curtis Hayes of the University of Texas at San Antonio presented examples of the detrimental effects of poor handwriting on teachers' perceptions of students' compositions. They then went on to outline a laboratory-type program to improve handwriting, showing many specific case histories of dramatic improvement through the program. As a result of this presentation, BYU-Hawaii is adding a handwriting skills unit to its English Skills Lab

Concurrently on Friday morning Richard Nakamura of the Hawaii Department of Education presented a two-hour session on the creation of specific objectives for use in composition classes which could be adopted or adapted by an English teacher to help insure that

minimal writing standards are attained.

On Friday afternoon Alice Pack of BYU-Hawaii led a detailed tour of the English Skills Lab at the university. Many specific programs in reading, listening, speaking, and writing were shown and/or demonstrated. Everyone who attended was able to discover some new programs he had not seen before.

Lynn Henrichsen of BYU-Hawaii presented a session on the effect of unorthodox spoken forms of English on the written English of ESL students. Materials to identify these problems were distributed, as well as programs to help solve them. Emphasized was the fact that the true problem must be identified before it can be solved and what often looks like a grammar problem is sometimes only the student trying to write what he thinks he hears.

Four workshops were held on Saturday. Frank Otto of BYU-Provo presented methods to evaluate compositions for skills other than grammar and mechanics. His materials are currently being adapted into the existing freshman English program at BYU-Hawaii. Gerald Dykstra of the University of Hawaii presented a video tape program illustrating the uses of humor and questioning a major element in the BYU-Hawaii English Skills Lab, as they are so easily used by students with a wide range of abilities. Greg Larkin of BYU-Hawaii presented a video tape program illustrating the uses of humor and questioning in the classroom, showing administrators of composition programs how they can use video taping as a means of increasing teaching effectiveness. Saturday afternoon W. Ross Winterowd of the University of Southern California discussed the uses of sentence combining and the role of hemisphericity in the composition process. This discussion incorporated the

most up-to-date, ongoing research in composition today.

Workshop participants also enjoyed a large number of extra features including two luncheons, with President Dan Anderson and Dean Jay Fox of BYU-Hawaii as speakers on Friday and W. Ross Winterowd speaking on Saturday. In addition, an evening at the Polynesian Cultural Center, including dinner and the

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spectacular, multi-cultural show, was included as part of the \$12.50 per day workshop.

The second annual year of composition workshop, to reword Churchill, was a case of "never was so much offered to so few." In a sentence, the workshop sessions themselves were uniformly excellent, but not as many attended as had been hoped.