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# Institute aids English skills

*International students also learn culture*

By Joan Herman  
 Of the Emerald

Imagine studying in a foreign university where you couldn't understand the language — and worse yet — no one could understand you.

Although prospects for academic success in such a situation seem grim at best, many international students do just that — with a little help from the University's American English Institute.

Located on PLC's second floor, the AEI is literally a college within a college. Most of the AEI's students — about 70 each term from all over the world — have not been admitted to the University, primarily because their English language skills do not meet University admission standards.

Enter the AEI.

"Our interest is in preparing people with the English skills needed to perform well in an academic setting," says Russell Tomlin, the AEI's new director. Those skills include reading, writing, speaking and listening in academic settings.

The AEI is one of many English institutes nationwide designed to teach international students the English language. Although most students studying at English institutes hope to enter American universities, some do so simply to live in the United States and learn its customs. Depending on the institute, language classes may center around learning 'survival' English, which is used in social settings, or acquiring academic English, which the AEI teaches.

Through an intensive class schedule that would leave many Americans exhausted — a minimum 20 hours weekly for at least four hours daily — international students acquire the English language — no easy task say their instructors.

"It's really amazing when you think about what they're doing and what they've accomplished," says Jackie Uhler, an AEI student counselor.

Although many students coming to the United States for the first time already speak English well — Japanese students are required to take six years of English to graduate from high school — some are complete beginners. Advanced students may require only a term at the AEI; beginners might stay as long as a year.

To enter an American university, international students must take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam. This University requires a score of 500 for undergraduates and 550 for graduate students. The average TOEFL score of students entering the AEI would be about 400, Tomlin says.

Last spring the AEI offered its first course to international students who were already admitted to the University, yet were having language difficulties. Although Tomlin says the 500 TOEFL score needed to enter the University is adequate, a score of 600 "seems to match up with what is needed (in terms of language proficiency) for academic success."

In the future, the AEI may offer workshops and courses for potential GTFs from other countries. In the past, many American students have complained



Photo by Mark Pynes

This father and daughter celebrate graduation from the American English Institute.

they often could not understand GTF instructors from non-English speaking nations. Tomlin admits the problem is a "pretty sensitive one." So if there is enough interest, the AEI will provide the workshops for GTFs.

Besides English language courses, the AEI has many support services for its students, including academic counseling and 'survival' counseling, which covers finding housing, buying medical insurance and handling other basic needs.

One common problem of international students is learning the ropes of the American "system". Many AEI students wish to go on to other American universities, yet often they don't know how to apply. So AEI instructors teach international students the American 'ropes.'

Another common problem for international students is meeting Americans. Often it is difficult for them to make the contacts, Uhler says, because they don't know where to start. "Our students want to meet American students, but they don't know how to do that. Sometimes they feel sad about that. Some even want to date Americans," she says.

So the AEI developed the Friendship Program, in which American students meet weekly on a social basis to chat one-to-one with AEI students. Both American and international students benefit from the opportunity to learn about a different lifestyle, Uhler says.

The AEI has also taken its students on field trips to the Oregon Coast, Crater Lake and even to a typical American rodeo.

So whether they remain at the AEI a term or a year, international students not only learn academic English, they get a thick slice of Americana, as well.

# Rebels attack Nicaraguan cities

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — U.S.-backed rebels announced a 2,000-man offensive Monday against cities throughout northern Nicaragua in an effort to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government.

"The war in the mountains has ended, we have launched an urban war," said the rebels' Radio September 15. It claimed attacks were made on Esteli, Nueva Segovia, Jinotega, Madriz and Zelaya provinces, but government military sources confirmed attacks in only two provinces, Nueva Segovia and Zelaya.

Elsewhere in Central America,

leftist Salvadoran rebels claimed the capture of a badly wounded army battalion commander and seven towns in eastern and northern El Salvador.

In Guatemala City, police reported the arrest of 2,600 people in an anti-terrorist sweep. But they said most of them were pulled in for not having identity cards and would be released as soon as friends or relatives vouched for them.

Although confirmation of the Nicaragua rebels' claim of a large-scale offensive was not available, military sources who asked not to be identified for security reasons

said a heavily armed rebel force surrounded Ocotol, a city in Nueva Segovia 148 miles north of Managua, but were not able to overrun it.

The sources said there was heavy fighting in which at least three government troops were killed, and the rebels blew up a bridge on a major highway on the outskirts of the city.

"They attacked from all four sides," one source in the town reported by telephone. "Around 5 a.m., during intense firing, we heard a tremendous dynamite explosion and afterwards found out they had blown up the bridge."

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