

Poor Attitudes Prevail

Freshman Vs. English

By E. J. SMITH
Battalion Special Writer

"Take freshman English in summer school or junior college and you will be much better off," said a counselor to a high school senior.

This statement points up a nearly universal attitude toward the course. It depicts the belief that freshman English courses are overly difficult or that they are of little value or both.

But the faculty of the Department of English has a different view of the subject and they have percentages to back up their opinions.

Texas A&M freshmen bring from their respective high schools varying impressions of what their first college English course will be like. And, in most cases, these impressions are poor ones.

They look upon the course as their first major stumbling block

in their pursuit of a college degree. As a result some students actually fear the course. Some see it as a punitive measure, that is, the price they have to pay to be allowed to take courses in which they are interested.

Obviously there is a reason for the way people feel about freshman English. But there is no pat or clear cut reason; many things contribute to this attitude.

Past experiences and examples of freshman English have helped to form this distasteful opinion. A major complaint against the course was that it was too abstract, that it was difficult for the student to understand exactly what was expected of him. Students felt lost from the beginning and sometimes were never able to realize what was happening in the classroom.

Some students were unable to see any purpose in the course.

Many have been unable to justify their being there by any other reason than the fact that the course was required. One freshman commented that he never felt guilty about cutting English class because when he was present nothing worthwhile happened.

Students thought that they were to be taught how to handle English prose in a possible way but often this purpose was obscured by emphasis on stoic essays and involved explanations.

Such things as these have contributed to freshman English's poor reputation. But less obvious factors have also had a bearing on the formation of opinions of the course.

For those who do not enjoy studying English the course can become overly dull and boring. This gets into the area of a person's natural likes and dislikes.

Parental ideas and concepts can have a bearing on how a student feels about English. In the home the student can be taught that English is a valuable tool and that it is worth the effort to master it. Or it can be ignored and set aside as being something sufficiently mastered in the third grade.

A person's proximity to the English language often makes him unaware that it is a subject that can be studied and improved upon. Day by day use of English can put a person so at ease in the language that he often cannot recognize a need to polish and perfect his speaking and writing.

The essence of the course itself presents another obstacle to its enjoyment. Many cannot easily accept criticism. And freshman English is a course where criticism is essential. People feel a close personal association with what they write and to have this ripped up by a professor's red pencil is annoying and often painful.

Another reason for freshman English's poor reputation is, in fact, poor grades. Students have come to regard a C in freshman English as a pretty good mark.

All, part, or perhaps variations of these factors have combined to give freshman English courses their poor reputation. Regardless of the extent to which all of these factors hold true they are what many people use as a basis for their opinion of the course.

Regardless of the way students feel about the course there is a definite need for it. Dr. H. E. Hiorth, chairman of freshman English, said that business and industry are continually calling for people who are better equipped to handle the English language, both written and spoken. He also pointed out that some universities have omitted freshman English but that this is done only when admission requirements are set at a level so that the students have no need for the course.

The course in freshman English has been altered within the last two years. This is in conjunction with a nationwide plan to provide a more distinct sense of direction and central focus for freshman English.

Statistics tend to disprove the belief that freshman English is an extremely difficult course to pass. Figures show that freshmen English has a lower percentage of failures than freshmen mathematics.

According to Dr. J. Q. Anderson, head of the Department of English, the failing percentages over the last five years are as follows: 1961—22%, 1962—19%, 1963—17%, 1964—12.1%, and 1965—12%. These compare favorably to a reasonably fixed percentage of about 25% failures in freshmen mathematics.

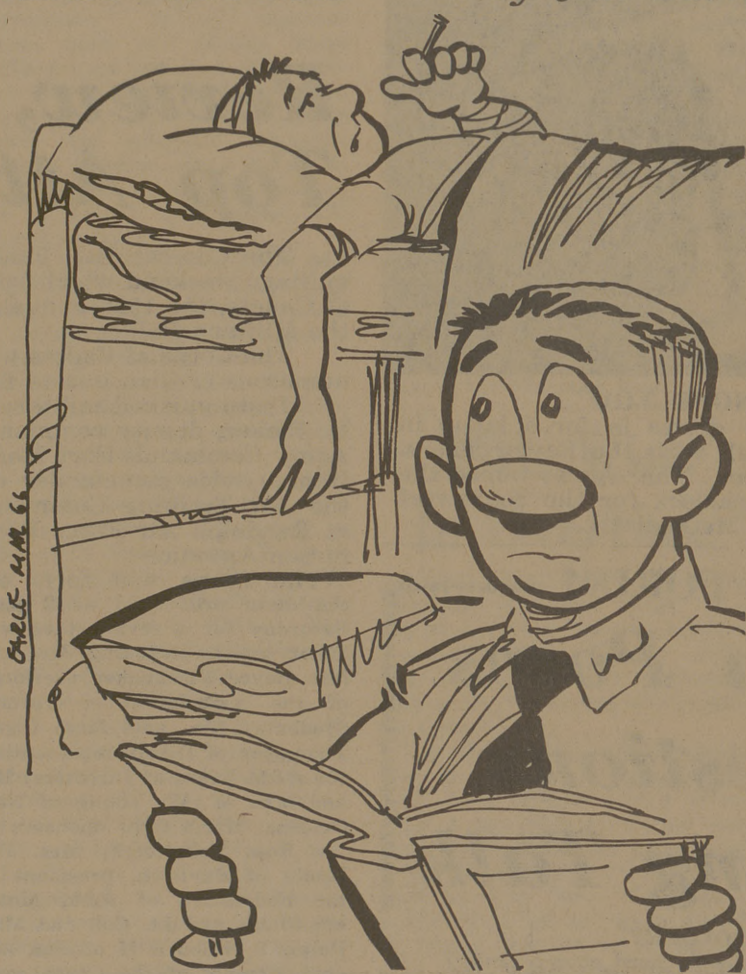
Dr. Anderson attributes this drop in the per cent of failures to a number of reasons. Among these is the fact that students are taking school more seriously because of international conflicts. He also believes that the increase in selectivity in admission requirements has resulted in a bet-

ter-prepared freshman student.

Another factor he points out is that less is being demanded of the students; the course no longer includes as much material.

Freshmen English does not seem to be the beast it is generally made out to be. It's changing with the times and trying to answer an apparent need.

CADET SLOUCH by Jim Earle



"I need advice! With th' Combat Ball, I.T.S., and the Military Ball this weekend should I study now and get ahead or would it be better to rest up so I could get a good start next week?"

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Purely Personal

By Dani Presswood

Radio and television business may look like fun to the outsider, but to a man who knows, this is a field of work, work and more work.

Texas A&M's educational TV program director Mel Chastain says that during periods of "intense concentration," such as in preparation for the upcoming Intercollegiate Talent Show broadcast, he and his staff each work about 80 hours per week.

"However, it's not an even business," he points out. "We'll work hard one week and slow down the next."

Chastain, 26, is a nine-year veteran of the radio-TV field. It all began at radio station KBRN in Brighton, Colo., where he spent his summers between school terms at the University of Denver.

He also mixed studies with work at three university radio and television stations and graduated in 1961, receiving his master's the following year.

However, he admits, "I've been acquainted with broadcast since junior high school."

Before coming to A&M Chastain served as producer-director of the closed circuit television network at the University of California in Berkeley for two years, turning out some 300 shows during the span.

Proceeding in this position he was production manager of "Science in Action" for one year. This is a weekly California Academy of Sciences television program produced at KRON-TV in San Francisco and syndicated throughout the nation.

Chastain is optimistic about the future of educational TV at A&M.

"Although A&M started about seven years late, the equipment we have purchased since 1965 is equal to or better than anybody's anywhere," he commented. "The support we've been given is very encouraging."

The A&M network broadcasts from 28-65 programs per week, contacting up to 850 students each hour and is capable of reaching 10 classrooms and one lecture hall simultaneously.

The broadcasts assist in the teaching of psychology, freshman English, biology and accounting. Chastain is quick to both praise and defend the importance of educational television as an aid to instruction.

"Educational TV is a supplement to, rather than a substitute

for, a live instructor," he pointed out. "We're not trying to replace any professors. This is just something to aid him, like a textbook."

In addition to its normal educational functions, A&M's television hookup has tackled such projects this year as "The Gene Stallings Show," video tape recordings and "instant replay" of the home basketball games for Coach Shelby Metcalf.

The most immediate undertaking is the taping of the upcoming Intercollegiate Talent Show Saturday. The broadcast will present the highlights in a 30-minute package and play in several cities.

Chastain, who is married and has a daughter, terms such projects "frosting on the cake."

"Our first allegiance is to the closed circuit duties," he stresses. "We spend most of our time making sure the network is O.K. for the educational broadcasts."

Mortimer's Notes

WELL, WE'RE BACK on the road toward the Southwest Conference basketball championship after relinquishing the lead to SMU for one day . . .

The Ponies gained a half-game edge Monday night when they downed TCU in overtime, but the Aggies knotted it all back up with Tuesday night's win . . .

Ain't those Mustangs lucky? Four of their last five games have been won either by one or two points or in an overtime . . . Their fifth one? Well, let's try to forget that one . . .

THE TEAM LEFT for Arkansas today at 1 p.m. for the BIG game . . . If (or rather when) we win and IF the Methodists beat Texas Tech Thursday night, the playoff will be in the Heart of Texas Coliseum in Waco Monday night . . . That's Big John's favorite gym . . .

He put in 44 points in his only visit to the Baylor home court this year . . . And last year he had 43 there . . .

The Aggies should be in fine shape for the game tomorrow night, despite only a two-day rest, unless they have sore arms from signing so many autographs last night . . . See Ya 'Round —MORTIMER.

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