

An evaluation of the English programme for AID participants
provided by the Yemen America Language Institute, and of the
available educational facilities

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1 Introduction

The intensive English programme for AID participants at the Yemen American Language Institute (YALI) became the responsibility of Oregon State University by contract between OSU and AID signed in August 1985. The Cooperative Agreement between the parties stipulates that a review of the programme is to be carried out annually. Under this term of the Agreement, I was invited by the English Language Institute of OSU to evaluate the YALI programme during the period October 27th. to November 17th., 1986. This on-site visit was timed to coincide with the period during which Leslie Palmer, Director of the English Institute, University of Maryland was at YALI at the invitation of S&T/IT/USAID for the same purpose. A harmonious working relationship developed between us during the two weeks that our visits overlapped, and when we found ourselves independently coming to very much the same conclusions concerning the YALI programme, the teaching faculty, the administrative officers, the students, and the facilities offered by the existing accommodation, we were able to jointly explore possible recommendations and to discuss these with YALI staff.

It is clear that the OSU/YALI programme easily fulfills the terms of the August 1985 Agreement. In addition, of considerable importance in any educational process involving students from a culture and from social backgrounds very different from those of the teachers, the YALI staff, both teaching and administrative, have established excellent working relationships with the students. This achievement must have played no small part in the educational successes of this first year of the OSU/YALI programme. It is also clear from the relative smoothness with which the Institute has been functioning these past several months that the administrative team have achieved effective solutions to the many operational problems that they encountered in August 1985 and the succeeding months.

Our conclusion must be, therefore, that the first year of the OSU/YALI project has witnessed important successes in the areas of prime importance to a young programme. Nevertheless, three serious problems, each interconnected with the others, yet await solution.

The first of these problems is to achieve the balanced curriculum that is clearly laid down in the Foundation course objectives at each level of the programme; in particular, to devote more time to developing the students' oral skills and the skills required in written communication. The second is to convince the students that the balanced curriculum which the majority of them in fact perceive as their best preparation for their future academic career in America will also enable them to surmount the TOEFL hurdle. The third is to somehow release those students who plateau in the TOEFL 490's, and who spend term after term in the Post Advanced level, thereby depressing both themselves and students in lower levels who fear that this will be their fate, too.

The recommended solution to all these problems is to terminate the Post Advanced course, not with a written examination as at present, but with viva voce examinations during which each student would discuss and defend a term paper that he had researched and written as part of the course requirement. It is further recommended that one member of the viva voce board (the YALI Review Board) should be an external examiner, and that he or she should be a member of the teaching staff of an American university with experience of supervising graduate students from overseas. Whenever possible, he or she should be in the same field of study as the student who is being vivaed. Finally, it is recommended that the Review Board should evaluate each student with this range of decisions in mind:

1. If he has already achieved a score of 490 on the TOEFL, or when he does, this student is/will be ready to go.
2. Through intense nervousness or some other cause, this student did not do justice either to himself or to his paper. He should therefore be reboarded as soon as possible.
3. For the following reasons this student is not yet ready to go ...

2 Data employed in the evaluation

1. I studied the copious curriculum and examination data kindly organized for me by the Academic Coordinator, the original Technical Proposals, and all the OSU/YALI quarterly reports.
2. I discussed the programme at length on many occasions with the Director and the Academic Coordinator.
3. I visited classes at all levels, subsequently discussing them with the teachers concerned.
4. I discussed the programme with teachers and with students.
5. To obtain student evaluations of the programme and various other data I constructed and administered a questionnaire, then analysed the responses.
6. To provide verification of my favourable impressions after a week of observing classes and talking to students I had teachers provide evaluations of student motivation.
7. Having absorbed the information gained by means of the above methods, I came to tentative conclusions and discussed them at length with Leslie Palmer, with the Director and with the Academic Coordinator.

3 The Yemen America Language Institute

3.1 Human resources

The administrative cadre currently consists of:

- Director
- Academic Coordinator
- Executive Officer
- Bi-lingual Assistant
- Expeditor (Yemeni Arab, highly proficient in English)
- Assistant Expeditor
- 2 work/study assistants - data processing and audio-visual technician
- Janitor

The Director and the Academic Coordinator are on assignment from the English Language Institute (ELI), Oregon State University (OSU). The remainder are local hires.

The teaching faculty currently consists of two staff members on assignment from ELI, OSU (3 years and 6 years of ELI experience), and 7 others. Of the 7, 4 have had several years' previous experience of teaching in Sana'a, one has had several years' experience of teaching in Kuwait, and 1 is a Yemeni national. All have earned an M.A. in TEFL, either in America or in the United Kingdom.

3.2 Physical resources

YALI shares facilities with USIS in two buildings next to each other in a compound. Neither building was purpose built for their present uses. One building houses the USIS Administration, Library, Conference Room, interview rooms, and some classrooms. The other building houses the YALI Administration, teaching faculty offices (shared with USIS teaching faculty), the majority of the classrooms, the reading, listening, and computer laboratories, the staff/student cafeteria, and the student lounge.

The computer laboratory consists of 6 Apple 2e computers with monitors and double disc drives, plus two printers. The software available for students is listed in Appendix .

The listening laboratory consists of 14 booths sited against 3 of the walls of the room, each being equipped with a cassette player and headphones. Under the guidance of the teacher in charge students select cassettes and allied course materials from the lab library, and work through them.

The listening laboratory is also equipped with a video tape recorder/player and a monitor; these are used most frequently for group work - notetaking activities, etc.

The reading laboratory is lined with bookshelves containing books, magazines, and other reading materials. Under the guidance of the teacher students select appropriate reading materials and work through them

privately at one of three tables, conferring with the teacher when necessary.

The popularity of the reading laboratory appears in large part to be due to the fact that many of the students do not have a quiet place at home to study in.

Data processing at the Institute is very largely accomplished by means of a Macintosh computer. This is equipped with a double disc drive, hard disc, printer, and modem. The modem is used to communicate with O&U via Telemail Service.

During the first several weeks of operating the Macintosh, large fluctuations in the line voltage caused considerable problems. These have been solved by a relatively simple yet effective voltage regulation system. In addition, a battery powered emergency power supply is hooked into the system.

3.3 The YALI students

Accurate age statistics are difficult to obtain; the following were taken from Institute records:

Age in Years	No. of Students	cumulative	cumulative %
19	0		
20	8	8	12%
21	3	11	17
22	6	17	26
23	2	19	29
24	3	22	34
25	3	25	38
26	1	26	40
27	6	32	49
28	6	38	58
29	1	39	60
30	4	43	66
31	8	51	78
32	9	60	92
33	1	61	94
34	1	62	95
35	1	63	97
36			
37	2	65	100%

Details of the students' academic career to date are provided in the two tables between this page and the next. These statistics were obtained from students' responses to items 1 and 2 of the student questionnaire that I administered.

With very few exceptions, the students who have completed university level programmes have done so at the University of Sana'a where the medium of instruction is largely or entirely Arabic, depending on the department concerned. The exceptions have attended university in either Egypt or

Saudi Arabia, where the medium of instruction is also Arabic. (There are numerous exceptions to this general rule in both Saudi and Egypt, notably in faculties of Engineering and Medicine, and at the American University of Cairo. But none of the YALI students attended such departments.)

The statistics presented above indicate that around 705 of the YALI student body intend to pursue graduate studies. Of these the majority are in the fields of Agriculture and Education.

Virtually all of the students are ministry or University employees. They are released on salary for full-time study at YALI, but on Thursday mornings and during between-term breaks they are required to return to their places of work.

All but one of the current study body are men. The large majority are married and have young families.

All the students are Yemeni nationals.

4 The OSU/YALI English Language Programme

The YALI English language programme is based on the OSU ELI intensive English programme which aims to prepare students to participate in university level courses. This has been run very successfully since 1965.

An outline of the placement and promotion procedures and of the organization of the YALI programme is provided below. A complete description comprising the original Technical Application, course descriptions, lists of teaching materials, and timetables is to be found in Appendix , which is in the separate folder. All the materials in this appendix are OSU/YALI documents.

Enrollment in the YALI programme is permitted at the beginning of any term. Currently, placement of new students is determined by means of a two-step process: all students complete the Michigan Test of English Proficiency (MTEP); those who score high enough on this test then complete an Institutional TOEFL. MTEP is most appropriate for placing students accurately in the levels up to Pre-Advanced, TOEFL for the levels above this. The consensus opinion of YALI teaching staff is that production sub-tests such as sentence completion exercises need to be added to the two multiple-choice batteries to provide more complete information for placement purposes.

On day one of a new term, a one-hour orientation session is organized for new students.

This term, the levels taught were as follows:

	Number of Students Registered
Introductory	4
Low Intermediate	17
High Intermediate	14
Pre-Advanced	14
Advanced	15
Post Advanced (1) and (2)	(1): 10; (2): 8
University	10
Total:	92

Promotion through all levels up to Advanced Level is by means of final course grades. These are determined on the basis of mid-term and final exam scores in the Foundation and Grammar courses plus teacher assessments in the other components of the course. Promotion into the Post Advanced level is made when a student achieves a score of 450 on either an Institutional TOEFL test or an International TOEFL. For promotion into the University Level, a score of 500 on either an Institutional or International TOEFL is required.

Institutional TOEFL tests are administered soon after the end of each term. Entry is open to all students. During the past year, students have had the opportunity to complete the test on the following occasions: November 85, February, March (International), May (International)

June, August (International), September, and November.

A typical day's schedule (which is the same every day of the week) is laid out below. A timetable for all levels is to be found in the appendix in the separate folder.

Low Intermediate Class Schedule June 14 - September 3, 1986

8.00 - 8.50	Foundation	(teacher A)
9.00 - 9.50	Foundation	{teacher A}
10.30 - 11.20	Reading Lab or Listening Lab	{teacher B}
11.30 - 12.20	Grammar	{teacher C}
12.20 - 1.10	Advising Hour**	
1.10 - 2.00	Reading Skills	(teacher D)

**Each student is allocated an adviser on enrollment at YALI. He has the same adviser throughout his YALI career. Both the Director and the Academic Coordinator are responsible for advising several students.

Staff are required to teach 20 hours per week, and to be on site 7.30 - 4.00. The time after class is allotted to staff meetings, test and course material preparation, etc. A typical duties assignment would be:

Foundation	10 hours
Grammar	5 hours
Reading Lab	5 hours

In addition, teachers are required to be available during the advising hour.

All teachers are required to construct and grade all the quizzes and tests for the courses that they teach.

The programme is taught 5 days a week, Saturday thru' Wednesday, 8.00 to 2.00. The weekly programme for all levels from Low Intermediate to Post Advanced is composed of the following elements:

Foundation: 10 hours
Grammar: 5 hours
Reading Laboratory: 2 hours (the first 3 levels)
3 hours (Advanced and Post Advanced)
Listening Laboratory: 3 hours (the first 3 levels)
2 hours (Advanced and Post Advanced)
Reading Skills: 5 hours (the first 3 levels)
TOEFL Skills: 5 hours (Advanced and Post Advanced)
Computer Lab: 2 of the Foundation hours
Advising: as required

During the session 1985 - 86, the terms were as follows:

- Term 1: August 1 - September 30
- Term 2: October 1 - December 4
- Term 3: December 7 - February 12
- Term 4: February 22 - April 30

During the session 1986 - 87, the terms are as follows:

- Term 1: June 14 - September 3
- Term 2: September 6 - November 12
- Term 3: November 22 - January 28
- Term 4: February 7 - April 15

5 Achieving a balanced programme at YALI, and the benefits thereof

5.1 Summary

The course description documents for each level in the YALI programme posit a classical balanced English for Academic Purposes curriculum designed to help students to develop the linguistic and study skills necessary for them to achieve academic success in an American university, and the socio-linguistic skills necessary for them to feel relatively at ease when interacting with the American academics, administrators, students, and other people with whom they will experience long or short term relationships. For understandable and justifiable reasons, these educational objectives are achieved at YALI only in part. To redress the balance, it is recommended that a student's state of readiness to go to America to study be evaluated by a board of examiners (the YALI Review Board) during a viva voce examination. The Board would take into account the student's achievement on the Test of English as a Foreign Language, but would also consider his academic record at YALI and his level of performance in linguistic and study skill activities that cannot be measured by the TOEFL test. It is anticipated that opening up this route to an American university would considerably increase the immediate (as opposed to long term) importance in the students' minds of those elements of the YALI curriculum which many of them cannot at present regard as of anything but secondary importance compared to those elements which appear to directly prepare them for the TOEFL test.

5.2 Background to the YALI Review Board Recommendation

American universities and international student sponsoring organizations such as AID have had so many discouraging experiences with non-American scholarship holders who did not possess the linguistic skills and academic background necessary to pursue their studies successfully that they have been forced to implement steadily increasing TOEFL score requirements. No student adviser who has observed a foreign student growing more and more anxious and resentful at his failure to be graduated (It is so difficult to admit that the problem lies within oneself.), or who has endured a long catalogue of complaints from the student's thesis supervisor will question the increased requirements. Nor will a university health centre doctor who has treated a succession of overseas students for intense depression. Nor, too, will a sponsoring agency which has seen a student's original good will towards America become hlighted. Thus, the sponsor pressure upon YALI to bring students up to the TOEFL 500 level is entirely understandable. And this pressure is transmitted to the YALI students.

The TOEFL test consists of three sections: listening comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary/reading comprehension. All three parts consist of multiple choice items, the candidate recording his answers on a separate answer sheet which is later marked using an optical scanner linked to a computer.

Contrary to a widespread belief in, or perhaps one should say a widespread reliance on, the accuracy or reliability of test scores, all

measurements of mental variables such as intelligence, maths ability, or English language proficiency include an element of error. Indeed, the manual for any respectable standardised test will provide an estimate of the error of measurement that will necessarily be associated with any test score, i.e. measurement. The TOEFL test is not a standardised test in the precise sense of the term; it cannot be for a number of reasons, not least the fact that a different form of the test is administered on each occasion. Nevertheless, the Educational Testing Service does give guidance concerning the inaccuracy of the measurements of English proficiency that a TOEFL test will provide:

Like all measurements, the scores provided for the TOEFL test cannot be perfectly precise, and an individual's scores can vary, just by chance from one administration of the test to another, even when there is no change in the examinee's "true" ability. The index that is commonly used to describe the degree of precision in a measurement is the "standard error of measurement". In the case of TOEFL, the standard error of measurement of the total score is approximately 14 scaled score points. This means that if an examinee's "true" ability score - the score the person would earn if the test could measure his or her ability with perfect precision - is, for example, 560, the chances are about two out of three that the person's observed score will be somewhere between 546 and 574 (560 plus or minus 14).

1986-87 Bulletin of Information for TOEFL and TSE, p. 11

In the light of these facts, one should be wary of relying too much on TOEFL test scores alone when deciding the fate of a scholarship applicant.

Studies have been undertaken by ETS to determine the relationship between TOEFL test scores and the ability to communicate in written or even spoken English. It is scarcely surprising given the linguistic factors common to the variables under investigation that quite respectable correlation coefficients have been achieved. After all, one requires knowledge of the grammar of a language and of its lexis to be able to communicate in it. But knowledge of the grammar and lexis of English does not of itself enable a person to communicate in English; many other skills are involved in communicative activities, skills that have to be taught, learned, and practised before a reasonable level of proficiency in them can be achieved. Consequently, although measures of a person's level of achievement in written communication and oral communication could validly be used to predict his level of achievement on a TOEFL test, the reverse relationship cannot be assumed. We may perceive a similarity between this situation and that of generations of American high school students who have achieved very respectable scores on the SAT verbal section, yet who desperately need not just freshman writing courses, but even bonehead courses in writing and the help provided in one-to-one writing clinics.

ETS is expected to add a writing section to the present multiple-choice TOEFL test battery in the near future. It is unlikely, however, that the writing score will be added to the scores on the multiple choice

sections of the test. Instead, it will probably be reported separately for university admissions officers to make what use of it they will, and acceptance/non-acceptance decisions will probably continue to be made on the basis of the better known main battery scores. Even if the writing scores were added to the main battery scores, it is unlikely that they would make a significant contribution to the total variance of the battery scores; consequently, they would have a scarcely noticeable effect on the final rank ordering of test candidates upon which the reported TOEFL scores are based. In other words, whatever his level of performance in the writing section, this would make little difference to a candidate's total TOEFL score.

Being intelligent people, students preparing for TOEFL would be quick to perceive this, and would revert to the long established strategies for TOEFL preparation that largely ignore the communicative skills, or relegate them to a minor role. Consequently, the present preoccupation of many YALI students with the rather limited learning objectives provided by TOEFL would continue.

Evidence of this preoccupation was not difficult to come by when either sitting in on classes or talking with YALI students in the cafeteria during between-session breaks. And teachers' responses to a questionnaire item served to verify my impressions and to underline the detrimental effect of this preoccupation. The question the teachers were asked was: "What do you think are the effects of the TOEFL test upon classroom activities?"

Students ... seem not to have free attention to learn English, read, even do coursework because they have to "get their TOEFL scores". Recently, this anxiety has spread down to the lower levels.

Students get TOEFL fixation, and begin to ignore anything not directly linked to passing the TOEFL.

I hate TOEFL hysteria ... We lost some very good students from High Int./Adv. 1 because they thought they couldn't cope.

There's no getting away from it: negative impact on lower levels. Also there is a slump after achieving TOEFL 500.

Student pressure exerts a powerful influence on most teachers, particularly when the students are as mature as those attending the YALI programme. Consequently, it is scarcely surprising that at times the relatively balanced curriculum that is laid down in the course description and objectives documents for the Foundation sessions at each level (See Appendix I) in practice is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. As one teacher put it: "When we get to Post Advanced, we have covered all the grammar. It is only then that we feel we can use the time in Foundation to practice the oral skills." Or as another teacher put it: "Trying to get them to write anything is like pulling teeth!"

Although they are preoccupied with achieving TOEFL 500, YALI students are well aware of the skills that they will need when they undertake their undergraduate and graduate studies in America. This is clear from their responses to items 2, 4, 6 and 8 in the questionnaire item below. (The remainder of the questionnaire is presented and discussed in a later section of this report.) The statistical analysis of the responses to the item below is to be found following this page. The results of this analysis would appear to indicate that provided they could see the immediate benefits of a balanced programme instead of one that is so strongly linked to the rather limited goals provided by the TOEFL test, the students would respond very positively.

3. Many non-American students are studying in American Universities. Most of them have some criticisms of the English programmes that they attended before they passed the TOEFL test. Think about the YALI programme that you are following, then indicate whether you agree or whether you disagree with each criticism below. Show your opinion by checking the appropriate box.**

	Agree	Disagree
1. More TOEFL practice is needed.		
2. More reading practice is needed.		
3. There is too much emphasis on grammar.		
4. There is not enough listening practice.		
5. There is not enough emphasis on learning vocabulary.		
6. There should be more practice in conversation and discussion.		
7. Films and videos should be used more for practice in notetaking and listening.		
8. There should be more practice in writing paragraphs and essays.		

**Note that the questionnaire that was administered to the students had been translated into Arabic.

Item 3 in the above question failed through mistranslation. The replacement item below was administered the next day. The results of the response analysis are on the page following the next.

Which statement do you agree with?

- A. This term we have spent just about the right amount of time studying grammar.
- B. This term we have not spent enough time studying grammar.
- C. This term we have spent more time than is necessary studying grammar.

Response Analysis of Replacement Item 3, Question 5

	Time just right A	Not enough time B	Too much time C	Total Students
Low Intermediate	7 = 41%	3 = 18%	7 = 41%	17
High Intermediate	12 = 100%			12
Pre Advanced	2 = 20%	7 = 70%	1 = 10%	10
Advanced	5 = 45%	6 = 55%		11
Post Advanced	7 = 54%	4 = 31%	2 = 15%	13
University	2 = 40%	3 = 60%		5
Total	35 = 51%	23 = 34%	10 = 15%	68

Students' opinion about the amount of time spent studying
grammar this term

5.3 The YALI Review Board recommendation

The level of a student's motivation to reach his personal educational goal largely determines the extent to which he will achieve that goal. Other constraints will operate, of course, for example, his intelligence, his cultural background, the educational base from which he begins the course of study on which he is currently engaged, the amount of time available to him for study, the quality of the programme that he is following, and, probably most important, his teacher's personal and professional qualities. But the student's personal motivation is the main determinant of his success.

At present, most YALI students see TOEFL 500 as their personal educational goal, and are positively motivated only by those elements of the YALI curriculum that appear to be most directly related to achieving that goal. Achieving TOEFL 500, however, only partially prepares them for their undergraduate and graduate careers in America. What needs to be done, therefore, is to establish in their minds an alternative educational goal, the achievement of which will require them to develop all the linguistic skills, socio-linguistic skills, and study skills that they will need. We consider that terminating the Post Advanced level course with a viva voce examination conducted by a Board that evaluates each student's readiness to proceed to the U.S. will achieve this. We also consider that this innovation will have a beneficial shunt effect on the curricula that are followed in each of the levels below Post Advanced, one that will enable the students at those levels to properly establish the linguistic knowledge and to develop the skills that they will need as Post Advanced students, when writing their term papers and discussing and defending them before the YALI Review Board at the end of the term.

The YALI Review Board's tasks would be to examine and appraise each student's YALI academic records, and to appraise his final term paper and his defence of it. They would also examine carefully his teacher's recommendations. They would then make their recommendation concerning the student's future course of action based on what they judged to be that student's best interests. The range of decisions open to the Board might include the following:

1. If he has already achieved TOEFL 490^{**}, or when he does, this student is/will be ready to go.
2. Through intense nervousness or some other cause this student did not do justice either to himself or to his term paper. He should therefore be re-Boarded as soon as possible.
3. For the following reasons, this student is not yet ready to go ...

^{**}Note that the raw scores on each section of the TOEFL are first scaled to produce equivalent scores across different forms of the test, then multiplied by 3.33 to produce the reported TOEFL score. So the difference between TOEFL 500 and TOEFL 490 is about 3 correct (or incorrect) answers.

If details of the YALI Review Board and its functions were carefully publicised among the students, they should see the Board as a humane, concerned group of people having their best interests at heart. This is essential if the viva voce process is not to assume even more anxiety provoking attributes than TOEFL 500. To help generate a positive attitude among the students towards the Board, I would suggest that each student be permitted both to nominate one member of the Board from among his teachers, and to veto the other YALI member if he so wishes. That is to say, if teacher Y is assigned to the Board for student A, and if student A prefers not to be boarded by Y, then another teacher should be assigned.

If the third member of the Board were an external examiner, someone who was a member of the teaching staff of a respected American university, and who had experience of supervising graduate students from overseas, this might well facilitate the acceptance of YALI students by American universities. One imagines that when trying to decide whether to accept an overseas student, any university admissions officer would be delighted to receive help in the form of a description of the YALI programme, a copy of the applicant's YALI transcripts, a copy of the YALI Review Board's joint report on the applicant and of his successful term paper, and a brief summary of the external examiner's relevant experience as a university teacher. This data together with the candidate's TOEFL test score details should ensure an affirmative decision.

5.4 The Post Advanced term paper

I would not pretend that the administrative burdens of the Review Board scheme on the teachers concerned are relatively light ones, and I suggest that the maximum class size should be 10. Supervising the production of what to each student will be a very important term paper will be very time consuming, and ensuring that each student adheres to a very tight schedule, very frustrating. But at least the burden of mid-term and final exams should be lightened with the removal of the writing component. Certainly, it is feasible: each year from 1977 - 82, second year medical students of Kuwait University accomplished the production of a term paper and much more during the last 8 weeks of a 6 hour per week English course. At the same time they carried 11 credits of other English medium courses (Zoology, Physics, and Medical Behavioural Science), and they prepared for mid-semester and final exams in all 4 courses. Class size was 12 - 14, and all teachers save the course coordinator taught another very demanding course with considerable out-of-class responsibilities.

The term paper schedule that I would suggest is as follows:

1. Immediately following the end of the previous term, all future Post Advanced students should meet as a group with their future Foundation teacher for initial discussion of the term paper project. Discussion would centre on a handout which would include the following:
 - a. a list of target dates
 - b. advice
 - c. a model for #2 below

2. During the between-term break and the first week of the new term, each student should decide on 2 - 3 possible topics, write a theme sentence for each one, identify information sources, and decide on his objectives for each one. For example, a student from the Faculty of Education might draft out the following:

Theme sentence:

The Academic Coordinator of OSU/YALI achieved solutions to many problems during her first several months in post.

Objectives:

1. To describe the problems
2. To describe the solutions
3. To describe how the solutions were arrived at
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the solutions

Sources:

1. Interviews with the Academic Coordinator, the Director, administrative staff, teaching staff and students
2. 2 questionnaires: 1 for students and 1 for teachers

3. During weeks 1 and 2 each student should confer with the Foundation teacher concerning the above; by the end of week 2 he should have decided which topic he is going to write on, and be in the process of reworking his original draft plan.
4. During week 3 each student should meet with his teacher to discuss what he has done. This almost invariably results in the decision to drastically reduce the scope of the paper so that it becomes manageable. The example topic given in #2 above would form the basis of at least 5 papers, and a teacher might persuade his student to research only the listening laboratory element. The modified plan might be:

Theme sentence:

An effective listening laboratory has been established at YALI, but many problems had to be solved first.

Objectives:

1. To describe the YALI listening lab
2. To describe the purpose of the YALI listening lab
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the listening lab
4. To describe the problems of setting up the listening lab, and how the solutions were arrived at

Sources:

1. Interviews with the Academic Coordinator, the Director, administrative staff and teachers (some to be recorded)
 2. Helen Polensek's paper, "Setting up a listening lab at the Yemen America Language Institute"
 3. 2 questionnaires, 1 for students (in English) and 1 for teachers
-
5. Week 5: the class is divided into groups of 3 to discuss (in English) each others draft outlines.
 6. Weeks 6 - 7: Students write up their draft papers using the word processor.
 7. Week 8: students discuss their draft papers with the teacher and, again in groups, with each other.
 8. Weeks 8 - 9: Final revisions to the papers completed.
 9. Weeks 9 - 10: Each student undergoes a viva voce examination conducted by a board consisting of the teacher and two students. The other members of the class take notes, and at the end of each boarding are required to ask each other questions based on the paper they have just heard defended, the student's defence of it, and the board members' comments.

It should by now be clear that a great many more skills are developed during the above exercise than simply those involved in writing a term paper.

6 The student questionnaire: construction, administration, and results

6.1 Introduction

A questionnaire was constructed, translated, and administered to the YALI students under controlled conditions, then their responses analysed to provide quantitative data concerning their evaluation of the OJU/YALI programme and other variables. The objectives of this exercise were:

1. To provide data on how satisfied the students are with the programme: how far they see it meeting their needs, helping them towards the following goals:
 - a. passing TOEFL
 - b. being able to function in an American university programme and in American society
2. To provide data on how far they see their progress as:
 - a. teacher related
 - b. programme related (textbooks, curriculum, courses)
3. To provide data on their conception of a good teacher's personal and professional characteristics

By the time that the draft English version questionnaire had been circulated among staff for critical comments and the final version agreed on, only 4 days of the term remained, and the last of those was final exam day. So the translation, typing up, duplication, collating and stapling, checking and parcelling up all had to be completed in two days. This was achieved, but it permitted no time for checking the Arabic. In the event only 3 small mistranslations were identified by the Yemeni staff member and several students from the University Level class. It was possible to remedy the problem caused by one of the mistranslations by administering a replacement question on the final day of term; the other two mistranslations proved to be of no significance to the final results.

The first two items of the questionnaire concerned the students' academic career to date: the number of years of university and the number of terms at YALI that they have completed. The results of the statistical analysis of the responses are to be found in section above.

The third item in the questionnaire, which concerned the students' evaluation of the YALI programme as a whole, and the results of the statistical analysis are to be found in section above.

With the exception of item 5, which students found difficult to understand, and which I omitted from the analysis as a result, all the other items with accompanying statistical analysis of the results and discussion are presented in sequence after the next subsection.

6.2 Administration of the questionnaire and analysis of the results

I administered the questionnaire myself with help where necessary from

the teacher in charge to all but five of the students during their normal reading and computer lab sessions. To ensure that everyone knew precisely what to do, I answered questions and circulated continuously watching them completing the questionnaire. I also checked each completed questionnaire before they left the room.

Students were required to write their names at the top of the questionnaire that they completed. There are pros and cons to this, of course, just as there are for the anonymous questionnaire. Students seemed to be quite willing to take responsibility for what they wrote; certainly no-one objected.

Analysis of the responses, construction of the graphical response distributions, and writing up conclusions took about 60 hours.

6.21 Results of the analysis of the responses to question # 4

Question #4:

At the end of each term, we give you a grade for each of your classes. Now we want you to grade each of your classes. Ask yourself how useful you think each class this term has been in helping you to improve your English.

The grades are as follows:

- A Excellent
- B+ Very Good
- B Good
- C Acceptable
- D Not Quite Acceptable
- F Unacceptable

Check the grade that you give each class:

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Foundation | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |
| 2. Computer Laboratory | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |
| 3. Grammar | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |
| 4. Reading Skills | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |
| 5. TOEFL Skills (Advanced and Post Advanced classes) | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |
| 6. Reading Laboratory | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |
| 7. Listening Laboratory | A | B+ | B | C | D | F |

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Student evaluation of their classes Questionnaire #4

SCALE
 A = 5
 B+ = 4
 B = 3
 C = 2
 D = 1

	Low Intermediate	High Intermediate	Pre Advanced	Advanced	Post Advanced		University	Scale
Foundation G.P.A.	4.2	4.2	3.4	3.9	(1) 3.9	(2) 3.6		Excellent = A = 5 V. Good = B+ = 4
Computer Lab. G.P.A.	3.6	3.2	3.1	2.6	3.4	3.6	3.8	Good = B = 3 Acceptable = C = 2
Reading Skills G.P.A.	2.9	3.9	3.8					
TOEFL Preparation G.P.A.				2.7	4.0	4.1		
Reading Lab. G.P.A.	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.0	3.3	4.0	
Listening Lab. G.P.A.	3.6	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.7	
Grammar G.P.A.	3.4	3.8	3.8	4.4	4.6	3.4		
Number of students:	17	13	10	11	8	7	6	
Average G.P.A. for the term:	3.5	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.8	

The results of the response analysis which are presented on the next page indicate that the students are very satisfied with the OCU/YALI programme. All the courses at all levels except Low Intermediate Reading Skills and Advanced Level TOEFL Preparation received a grade of B (= Good) or higher, and 15% received a grade of B+ (= Very Good). The average grade point average for courses at every level was above 3 (= Good), and the average grade point average for the programme was 3.5. For a programme that is only one year old, this is something to be proud of.

6.22 Results of the analysis of responses to question #6

Question #6:

Do you think that A or B will help you most in achieving 500 on the TOEFL? Check box A or box B to show your opinion.

1.

A
B

 Your textbooks
Taking the YALI TOEFL 4 times a year
2.

A
B

 Your textbooks
The homework and class preparation that you do
3.

A
B

 Your textbooks
Attending class every day
4.

A
B

 Your textbooks
Your teachers
5.

A
B

 Taking the YALI TOEFL 4 times a year
The homework and class preparation that you do
6.

A
B

 Taking the YALI TOEFL 4 times a year
Attending class every day
7.

A
B

 Taking the YALI TOEFL 4 times a year
Your teachers
8.

A
B

 The homework and class preparation that you do
Attending class every day
9.

A
B

 The homework and class preparation that you do
Your teachers
10.

A
B

 Attending class every day
Your teachers

Student evaluation of the relative importance of various factors in their learning English Questionnaire #6

	Low Intermediate		High Intermediate		Pre Advanced		Advanced		Post Advanced (1)		Post Advanced (2)		University		Grand Totals	% 'S	Ranks
	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks			
	Textbooks	19 (11%)	4th	17 (13%)	4th	11 (11%)	4th	25 (23%)	3rd	12 (17%)	3rd	9 (13%)	4th	10 (17%)			
TOEFL	18 (11%)	5th	13 (10%)	5th	9 (9%)	5th	13 (12%)	4th	9 (13%)	4th	4 (6%)	5th	4 (7%)	5th	70	10%	5th
Homework	38 (22%)	3rd	37 (29%)	2nd	23 (23%)	3rd	11 (10%)	5th	7 (10%)	5th	11 (16%)	3rd	15 (25%)	2nd	142	20%	3rd
Attendance	45 (27%)	2nd	30 (23%)	3rd	30 (30%)	1st	29 (26%)	2nd	19 (27%)	2nd	22 (31%)	2nd	17 (28%)	1st	192	27%	2nd
Teachers	50 (29%)	1st	33 (25%)	1st	27 (27%)	2nd	32 (29%)	1st	23 (33%)	1st	24 (34%)	1st	14 (23%)	3rd	203	29%	1st
TOTAL STUDENTS																	

It is very reassuring to see Teachers, Attendance, and Homework (in that sequence) heading the rank-ordered lists.

The importance of the responses to this question when allied to those for question #'s 8 and 9 is that they provide hard data indicating where the Yemeni student at YALI places his teacher in order of importance in the learning process, and what qualities, both personal and professional, he looks for in his teacher.

6.23 Results of the analysis of responses to question #7

Question #7:

Do you think that A. or B. will help you most to improve your English?
Check box A or box B to show your opinion.

Part I:

1. A. The Reading Laboratory sessions
 B. The Listening Laboratory sessions
2. A. The Reading Laboratory sessions
 B. The Computer Laboratory sessions
3. A. The Listening Laboratory sessions
 B. The Computer Laboratory sessions

Part II:

4. A. The Laboratory sessions (computer, reading, and listening)
 B. Grammar classes
5. A. The laboratory sessions (computer, reading, and listening)
 B. Foundation classes
6. A. The Laboratory sessions (computer, reading, and listening)
 B. Skills classes (reading or TOEFL preparation)
7. A. Grammar classes
 B. Foundation classes
8. A. Grammar classes
 B. Skills classes
9. A. Foundation classes
 B. Skills classes

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Student Rank orderings of their classes Questionnaire #7

	Low Intermediate		High Intermediate		Pre Advanced		Advanced		Post Advanced (1)		Post Advanced (2)		University		Grand Totals	% S	Ranks
	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks	Totals	Ranks			
Reading Lab.	15 (29%)	3rd	17 (44%)	1st	7 (23%)	3rd	14 (42%)	1st	8 (33%)	2nd	5 (28%)	2nd	11 (58%)	1st	77	36%	2nd
Listening Lab	20 (39%)	1st	17 (44%)	1st	4 (13%)	1st	13 (39%)	2nd	11 (46%)	1st	9 (50%)	1st	6 (32%)	2nd	90	42%	1st
Computer Lab	16 (31%)	2nd	5 (13%)	3rd	9 (30%)	2nd	6 (18%)	3rd	5 (21%)	3rd	4 (22%)	3rd	2 (11%)	3rd	47	22%	3rd
All Lab. Sessions	18 (18%)	4th	13 (17%)	4th	8 (13%)	4th	13 (20%)	4th	6 (13%)	4th	6 (17%)	4th	9 (26%)	2nd	73	17%	4th
Grammar Sessions	29 (28%)	1st	27 (35%)	1st	19 (32%)	2nd	21 (32%)	1st	11 (23%)	3rd	11 (31%)	2nd	9 (26%)	2nd	127	30%	1st
Foundation Sessions	27 (27%)	3rd	14 (18%)	3rd	11 (18%)	3rd	15 (23%)	3rd	19 (40%)	1st	7 (19%)	3rd	6 (17%)	4th	99	23%	3rd
Skills Reading or TOEFL Prep ⁿ	28 (28%)	2nd	24 (31%)	2nd	22 (37%)	1st	17 (26%)	2nd	12 (25%)	2nd	12 (33%)	1st	11 (31%)	1st	126	30%	2nd

Discussion concerning the results of the response analysis for #7

Laboratory Sessions

Only in the case of the University class did the Listening Laboratory sessions fail to attract either the majority or the near-majority of each class. This needs to be capitalised on by increasing the integration of the recorded materials and the associated activities, particularly note-taking, paragraph writing, and the writing of essays.

It would appear that something needs to be done to increase the relevance of the computer lab sessions to the majority of consumers. Certainly, something needs to be done to open the eyes of Post Advanced and University level students to the benefits of adding word processing to their battery of study skills. Virtually every department in Oregon State University, for example, expect students, especially graduate students, to be computer literate.

The results of this survey should not be taken as evidence that the computer lab sessions are of debatable value. (I do not think that any YALI staff member does.) Each of us has his own learning style, and if only two or three students in each class gained a great deal from this part of the programme, that plus familiarising the remainder with computer technology is justification enough for the expense, and for the time allocated to it in the programme (2 hours per week).

Laboratory/Grammar/Foundation/Skills Sessions

The most disturbing conclusion based on the response analysis for this section of question #7 is that the Foundation Course is not perceived, or is apparently not received, as providing the foundation to their progress in their study of English by any but section 1 of the Post Advanced group. Only 8 respondents entered this particular sample, but since 5/8 rated Foundation as more beneficial than Grammar sessions, and 7/8 rated it more beneficial than Skills sessions, it would be interesting to discover what the teacher did to turn them on for Foundation.

Otherwise response analysis of this section verified the results obtained in other parts of the questionnaire, indicating as it does that the majority of students see grammar as the key factor in their achievement of their immediate objectives.

6.24 Results of the analysis of responses to questions #8 and #9

The results of the response analysis of questions 8 and 9 (All to be found on the next three pages.) are self explanatory, and need to be pondered on by the reader rather than glossed by the writer, except in one important case: the meanings attached to the Arabic for option H in question 8. Follow-up questioning of the University level students concerning the areas of meaning attached to the key words used in this question elicited the following responses for the Arabic word for "caring":

asks each student if he has any problems
offers more time in advising hour
big heart
well prepared for class
makes time for his students
accepts all questions and tries to explain them fully
does not neglect even simple things

Since option H received the highest rating, it is important to notice the overlap of meaning that it has in Arabic with the behavioural characteristic described in question 9, option C, which also received the highest rating.

Question #8:

We want to know what you think the personal characteristics of a good teacher are. Choose the 3 of the following characteristics that you think are the most important. Show your opinion by checking the box next to each one that you choose.

In my opinion, a good teacher is:

(Choose the 3 most important.)

<input type="checkbox"/> A.	patient	<input type="checkbox"/> D.	interested in me	<input type="checkbox"/> G.	strict
<input type="checkbox"/> B.	kind	<input type="checkbox"/> E.	enjoyable	<input type="checkbox"/> H.	caring
<input type="checkbox"/> C.	helpful	<input type="checkbox"/> F.	demanding		

You chose 3 characteristics; now tell us which is the most important characteristic, the next most important, and the 3rd. most important by writing their letters (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or H):

1st. (the most important): _____ 2nd.: _____ 3rd.: _____

Question #9:

Now we want to know what you think the professional characteristics of a good teacher are. Choose the 4 of the following characteristics that you think are the most important. Show your opinion by checking the box next to each one that you choose.

In my opinion, a good teacher:

(Choose the 4 most important.)

- | | |
|----|---|
| A. | speaks very clearly |
| B. | is fair in grading my work |
| C. | usually knows exactly what is going to be taught, and how to teach it |
| D. | is usually well organized |
| E. | knows what I need to do to achieve TOEFL 500 |
| F. | explains so well that I can understand easily |
| G. | is usually well prepared |
| H. | is rarely absent |
| I. | is nearly always on time |
| J. | is usually very well dressed |

You chose 4 characteristics; now put them in order of importance:

1st.: _____ 2nd.: _____ 3rd.: _____ 4th.: _____

7 Teacher evaluation of student motivation

Foundation class teachers at all levels were asked to evaluate their students' levels of motivation. The scale set out below was used in this exercise. The results of this exercise verified the impressions that Leslie Palmer and I had obtained whenever we visited classes, spoke to students, or examined their work.

According to teachers, the general level of motivation for learning English at the Institute is extremely high: 35.4% of the students were rated in the A range (extraordinarily highly motivated), and 74.4% were rated B- or above (highly motivated).

- A Extraordinarily highly motivated. Perfect attendance, preparation for class and participation in classroom activities. Homework assignments are always a pleasure to mark. Does not often come for help, but when he does, it is always in an extremely positive manner.

- A-

- B+ Very highly motivated.

- B Quite highly motivated.

- B-

- C+ Sufficiently well motivated to achieve an acceptable degree of progress

- C

- D+ Not quite sufficiently well motivated to achieve an acceptable degree of progress

- D Very poorly motivated. Tardiness and absence a constant problem. Rarely prepares for class, and only participates in class activities if absolutely forced to. Homework assignments, if handed in at all, are extraordinarily untidy, badly done, and a pain to mark. Never comes for help, occasionally to complain.

- F

8 Classroom and staffroom facilities at YALI

Classroom and staffroom facilities at YALI are cosy, but scarcely adequate even at the present level of student and staff numbers. I have not had the opportunity to visit the new University of Jann'a complex, but I imagine that the YALI funding agencies would wish the YALI facilities, the students' first experience of an American institution, to be at least comparable to those which the majority of YALI students in the future will associate with tertiary level education.

For many years, the British Council in Kuwait was housed in an old Kuwait walled residence that most British expatriates regarded with affection and thought terribly quaint. Only a handful of Kuwaitis were attracted to the British Council English classes, and student numbers scarcely reached a hundred. In about 1977, the British Council moved to a modern building that provided excellent classroom facilities. A year later, student enrollment was up to 500, two years later, to over 700. A significant proportion of them were Kuwaitis, and many of these were women. For the first time ever in Kuwait, the direct teaching operation not only because self funding, it also achieved a healthy surplus - simply because of the change of image.

I am not suggesting that the present YALI accommodation could possibly be regarded as quaint, but if student numbers increase, and if the Institute undertakes any of the English for Special Purposes projects that are already being mooted by ministries and the oil company, it will certainly be inadequate.

9 Audio visual facilities at YALI

The absence of any audio visual facilities in the YALI classrooms was particularly striking. Any modern language classroom should be equipped with an overhead projector at the very least, for it is an essential tool when teaching reading and notetaking skills, the skills involved in paragraph organization, outlining, and term paper organization; otherwise the teacher spends half his time writing on the board.

A VTR and monitor (with remote control) can so enrich language courses, and this equipment is so inexpensive these days compared to teachers and books, that it can scarcely be considered a luxury to have a set in each classroom.

There should also be at least 3 slide projectors and 3 video camera kits in the equipment store for teachers to sign out as required.

A fully equipped audio visual recording studio might be a little exaggerated, but a sound-proofed room equipped with good, controllable lighting would be extremely useful for the production of teaching materials, particularly since the listening lab is a core course.

10 Reference resources at YALI

The reading laboratory is not intended to be a library resource centre, but if writing term papers becomes a prime objective of the Post Advanced class, reference resources will need to be provided. At least 6 different sets of encyclopedias will be needed, numerous dictionaries, particularly specialist dictionary/encyclopedias such as those in the Penguin list, and various other works which would best be specified, I suppose, by a high school librarian specialist.

Ideally, the reference resources would be housed in a room to which students would have relatively free access during advising hour and the afternoon, and which would be furnished with study cubicles in American style.

11 Orientation courses

I think that orientation courses whose sole functions were to introduce students to American organization, procedures, life, etc. and to provide some insights into American society and institutions would be rather uneconomical of valuable teaching time. In addition, such courses lend themselves only too well to a teacher-oriented chalk and talk approach. I recommend, therefore, that orientation be fully integrated into Foundation, Reading Lab, and Listening Lab sessions. For example, a unit could be built around short (3 - 5 minute) videotape films of the Oregon homes of OSU/ELI teaching staff. These could include a Thanksgiving dinner party, a child's birthday party, and a picnic in the garden. Between such films and the teacher informant one half of the dialogue is provided; the other half would be provided by YALI students by means of photos and verbal descriptions. In other words, an inter active, comparison and contrast dialogue would develop that would be fruitful of learning on both sides. This would develop the students' linguistic skills, increase their linguistic data base, and provide rich material for follow-up writing exercises.