

# Academics decry poor English

By Patsy Moy

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THE standard of English of Hong Kong students has dropped in recent years, academics said.

Dr Joseph Hung Hin-wai, the associate professor of the Chinese University's English Department attributed the drop to the education system.

Students who did not have a linguistic aptitude were sent to an "English-medium" school, where textbooks are in English, Dr Hung said.

In Hong Kong 98 per cent of secondary schools were English-medium schools, he said.

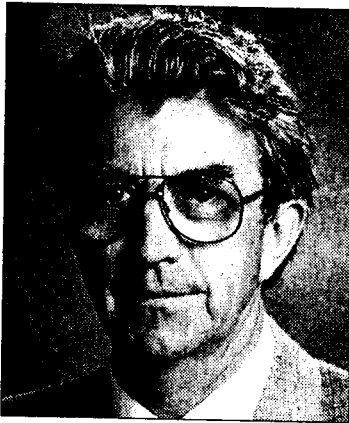
The standard of teachers in English-medium schools had dropped, said Dr Hung.

"If the input is not satisfactory, the output would not be very satisfactory either."

He said the contribution of international schools to English teaching in Hong Kong was limited.

Only a small portion of locals could afford to send their children to be educated by native English speakers in those schools, he said.

Professor Andrew Parkin, also from the university's English De-



**Professor Parkin: Competition for university places not as fierce.**

partment, said some students who were admitted to the university had a poor standard of English.

"This could be because there are more universities and there are more people going into universities.

"Therefore the competition for places is not as fierce," Prof Parkin said.

Last year the Chinese University began informal English courses for its students.

The courses, which were part of the university's language improvement program, are conducted in the evenings and during vacations.

"The initial result appears to be very encouraging," said Dr Hung.

Yesterday saw the closing ceremony for English-speaking summer camps for first-form students run by the Chinese University.

Six hundred pupils from 30 schools took part in the camps organised in July.

The camps, a three-year-project, were financed by \$2.9 million from the government's language fund. This was the second year of the project.

Prof Parkin said the university would press for the fund to be extended.

"The demand appears to be very great. Many schools have expressed their intention of taking part in the camp project again," Dr Hung said.

The purpose of the camps was to encourage students to use English. "It provides the first step in the right direction, learners get to share the responsibility in their future learning," Dr Hung said.