

\$10m earmarked for English skills

By BERYL COOK

GRANTS to boost English skills will rise by a third next year to \$40 million.

And outgoing University and Polytechnic Grants Committee chairman, Mr Andrew Li Kwok-nang, said yesterday that schools should also increase their efforts.

"Language standards are a problem worldwide but Hongkong is doing more than most countries to improve the situation," he said.

Special grants for remedial English totalled \$30 million this year.

The boost outpaces Government plans to expand first year first-degree places by 27 per cent before 1994-95.

It hopes to provide 18 per cent of the relevant age group with places.

Tertiary intake standards remained high to comply with internationally recog-

nised matriculation standards.

However, education had moved away from "an elitist system" to let in more students from lower academic backgrounds.

"These days about 50 per cent of tertiary students live in public housing and 50 per cent of their parents do not have a secondary education background," said Mr Li.

This meant the average English language standard of the pool could have fallen.

Mr Li said expansion could produce more managers for southern China, and more local lecturers and research staff for Hongkong.

Expanded research positions and programmes would attract higher quality people to academic posts and help Hongkong develop its strengths for economic co-operation with China.

Mr Li will be replaced as UPGC chairman by Citibank country corporate offi-

cer, Mr Anthony Leung Kam-chung, today.

Mr Li said he would concentrate on his work as an Executive Councillor.

Meanwhile, Education and Manpower secretary Mr John Chan Cho-chak told the Legislative Council yesterday that UPGC would look at a more comprehensive system covering study credit units.

A UPGC spokesman said the institutions operate different systems and this stops students transferring credits between institutions and courses.

Recommendations in Education Commission Report Number Three involved complicated changes but the UPGC could now consider the credit system proposal.

A recommendation may not be made until a report on the 1992 to 1995 review of higher education development is produced.