REVAMPING AN INTENSIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM: CHALLENGES AND INNOVATIONS

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Abstract

This article describes an attempt to reform a curriculum of an English intensive language program in the Sultanate of Oman. The reform consisted of several stages, starting from the identification of needs until choosing teaching materials. Based on the data obtained from the various sources of the study (i.e. survey, observations, interviews, and workshops), a number of changes were introduced to the curriculum. This project revealed important issues to be addressed in order to make the program design and evaluation more effective in upgrading students' English language proficiency and academic competence so that they are better prepared for college study.

Keywords: English intensive language program, English language proficiency, academic competence

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum innovation is a complex process that involves several procedures. One of the fundamental concepts in innovation is that it has to be context-specific, that is, the innovator has to consider the factors that support or inhibit the diffusion of an innovative idea in a certain setting (Stoller, 1994). This requires the identification of the perceptions of both the change agent and the adopters and the institutional constraints that might influence the diffusion of innovation. For any innovation to succeed, all those involved in the educational system must have a shared understanding of what it is that is worth changing and how it should be changed. Innovation should be perceived as being relevant and having relative advantage to the adopters (Markee, 1997). In addition, change is more likely to be successful when it is collectively constructed by the reformer and those involved in the system. As Fullan (2001, p. 18) states, "The main reason that change fails to occur in the first place on any scale, and does not get sustained when it does, is that the infrastructure is weak, unhelpful, or working at cross purposes." Innovation must be a result of sincere negotiation between all parties involved. Unless users see a legitimate

reason for undertaking that change, they are more likely to reject it (Fullan, 2001). Therefore, change adopters must be given the opportunity to articulate their ideas and opinions about change. Further, change requires sincere commitment by innovators and adopters. House (1974, p. 73), in Fullan (2001, p. 36), asserts that: "Innovations are acts of faith. They require that one believes that they will ultimately bear fruit and be worth the personal investment, often without the hope of immediate return."

Stoller (1994) surveyed the opinions of 60 key administrators in the University Consortium of College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP) in the US about the influence of 13 factors on different types of innovations in their institutions. The respondents were then interviewed to comment on the factors identified in the survey. The results showed that viability played the strongest facilitative role, followed by dissatisfaction, and then divergence. The researcher notes that her findings contradict the prominence of 'dissatisfaction' reported in the previous studies on innovation. However, Stoller remarks that the influence of each factor depends on innovation type. That is, dissatisfaction plays the strongest facilitative role for innovations in student placement and evaluation, but a less prominent role in innovations in community/campus liaison. In the final analysis of the factors, Stoller combines the 13 factors into three main groups:

1. Balanced divergence: the extent to which change is compatible with the current beliefs and practices
2. Dissatisfaction: the extent to which the users are satisfied with the status quo
3. Viability: the extent to which innovation matches the institutional resources

Stoller notes that innovative ideas often emerge as a result of dissatisfaction about the status quo, but the diffusion of the change will depend on other factors. She continues that for any change to be accepted it must fall within "the zone of innovation" (1994, p. 320), that is, the change must be 'viable', must appeal to the users' needs and interests, and is neither excessively divergent nor too similar to the current practices.

In a description of his personal experience in the Sudan, Markee (1997, and elsewhere) highlights the impact of socio-political factors on innovation diffusion. Markee describes the difficulties faced by innovators when trying to implement change that is deemed irrelevant and inappropriate by the hosts. One of the major factors that inhibited program diffusion was the lack of ownership. That is, because the changes were brought by expatriates, the local teachers and administrators saw them as being irrelevant. Markee (1997) contends that ownership is a fundamental

condition for innovation diffusion. Users must feel that they have stake in the success of the course and that their needs and interests are being met in the process of curriculum change. They must also realize that their input is important.

In summary, there are three main considerations for any successful curriculum innovation. First, there must be harmony between the change agent and the adopters. The change agent should identify the users' perception towards the change and involve them throughout the process of change. Second, change should be directed to the pressing needs of the users. It should be perceived as relevant and significant. Finally, each learning context is different and therefore any change should reflect this difference. Change should be introduced in a way that fits the particular characteristics of the situation and the people involved. In the next sections, I will examine the concept of change in content-based instruction. In the remaining sections of this paper, I shall describe the revision project that took place in an intensive English language program.

THE CONTEXT

This study took place in an intensive English language program (IELP therefore) which is part of Sultan Qaboos University. At this university, English is the medium of instruction in all the colleges except the College of Arts and Social Sciences and the College of Education, where students learn English as a subject for two or four semesters. The intensive program delivers a total of about 1,300 hours of intensive English instruction every week and has an annual student body of about 1,800 (Language Center, 2001). Upon admission to the University, all students (i.e. freshmen) are given an English language placement test. Based on their placement test scores, the students are distributed among five language levels ranging from one to five (one being elementary and five high intermediate). Each level lasts for eight weeks (the school year at the Language Center is divided into four 8-week blocks). Instruction in the first two levels is the same for all students. At Level Three and above students are distributed into four programs according to their respective college. During their enrollment in the intensive program, students in all levels are not allowed to take any content courses. Students in all levels receive 20 hours of intensive language instruction and do not take any university credit for the language courses. Nevertheless, this intensive language instruction is mandatory for every student who is found to need it based on his or her placement test scores. In addition, while in the intensive program, students are not allowed to take any university or college courses besides the language courses. It is therefore expected that the absence of credit and the

feeling of isolation from college may cause the students to lose motivation in learning the language. Finally, it should be noted here that students who are placed in levels 1 or 3 of the intensive program are not true beginners as they will have studied English for nine years. They can be referred to as "false beginners". Their placement in the lowest level might be due to a number of factors. First, the placement test is largely based on language structures and only tests two skills, grammar and reading. Second, the students probably come to the language center having acquired a fair amount of knowledge about the target language but perhaps did not have enough opportunities to put it into practice.

THE STUDY

The study was prompted by the growing dissatisfaction among students and teachers about the effectiveness of the intensive program in meetings students' needs. Specifically, the program curriculum was based on grammar structures taken from particular textbooks. The program did not address the students' needs in terms of academic and study skills. In addition, it was test driven and students and teachers merely focused on teaching certain grammar points. In addition, we realized that the students had specific needs in taking the intensive program, that is, learn English to understand lectures. Therefore, we wanted to make the program more focused and directed towards the students' needs and faculty expectations.

DATA COLLECTION

A variety of data collection tools were used to elicit information about the students' needs. These were a survey, classroom observations, and workshops. The survey and observation forms can be found in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. The survey contained closed and open-ended questions that elicited the students' attitudes towards the intensive program in terms of equipping them with the necessary language and academic skills. It was based on the different types of language and academic skills and tasks students are expected to master in their college courses. The students were asked to rate the impact of language program on developing selected language and academic skills. The classroom observations were non-participant observations in which observers used a checklist to record student behavior in specified areas. After the observations, the observer sat down with the students and teachers separately to discuss the lecture and seek clarification on certain points. The observations and interviews revealed crucial information about college requirements and challenges. Finally, the workshops were meetings with language teachers who taught in the intensive program. The purpose of the meetings was to elicit the

teachers' opinion about the program. The meetings were centered around the issues that emerged from the observations and interviews in terms of students' needs and problems and also the potential gaps in the language program.

This triangulation of elicitation techniques helped us gather reliable and valid data about the students' needs, as their information came from and was validated by different stakeholders (Long, 2005).

DATA ANALYSIS

The closed statements were analyzed using a statistical package called SPSS. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each statement. As for the three open-ended questions, namely: What did you like most about the IELP?, What did you like least about the IELP? and Any other comments?, the responses were grouped according to the following categories that each relates to a certain component of the intensive program that emerged from the data. For the sake of this paper, I will only focus on the areas related to the language skills and knowledge.

1. Reading and vocabulary
2. Writing
3. Listening
4. Speaking
5. Grammar

After the data were classified according to these groups, they were further sub-grouped based on college and specialization. The data for each college were analyzed by a team of teachers in order to ensure inter-rater reliability. The teachers were asked to crosscheck their entries to minimize differences in interpretations.

As for the classroom observations and interviews, the data were analyzed and grouped into the following emerging categories:

I. What difficulties do students face in their college courses?
Write description for each of the four points as applicable.
1. Linguistic problems
    a. reading skills
    b. vocabulary
    c. grammar
    d. writing
    e. speaking

    f. listening

    g.   spelling

2. Academic/study problems
   a. note taking
   b. finding resources
   c. study load
   d. difficult textbooks
   e. cultural appropriateness of textbooks
   f. bad reading habits
   g. bad study habits

3. Attitudinal/personal problems
   a. lack of confidence to use English in class
   b. lack of concentration
   c. shyness
   d. do not practice English outside the class

4. Lecturer specific
   a. English language proficiency
   b. accent or pronunciation
   c. delivery speed
   d. tone
   e. teacher dominance
   f. teaching techniques

II. What suggestions do students and lecturers have for improving the IELP?
   1. language skills teaching and practice (the four language skills + grammar, spelling, vocabulary)
   2. academic skills teaching and practice (presentations, dictionary use, library skills, computer skills, research skills, note taking, etc)
   3. teaching materials
   4. duration of program
   5. assessment techniques
   6. teaching activities
   7. credit IELP
   8. raise awareness of IELP value

After that, a report was composed for each lecture incorporating the comments about all the categories and subcategories outlined above. As for the workshops with language center teachers, the teachers were gathered in

small groups and asked about their feedback regarding the same areas that emerged from the surveys. The teachers' comments about each area were recorded and converted into a report.

RESULTS

The IELP project revealed important issues that needed to be addressed in order to make the program more effective in upgrading students' English language proficiency and academic competence so that they are better prepared for college study. Based on the data obtained from the various sources of the study (i.e. survey, observations, interviews, and workshops), a number of findings were arrived at to guide curriculum reform to help address the concerns of all parties and prepare for the change in the level system. For the sake of space, I shall address the findings related to two categories, language skills and objectives. Each area below includes a summary of the study findings from the participants and a list of recommendations. The recommendations apply to all the IELP levels unless otherwise indicated.

1. **Language Skills**
   This area contains the four language skills and grammar. The skills were put together for the sake of convenience.

   a. **Reading and vocabulary**
      There was a general concern about the students' reading ability based on the data from the survey and the observations. The IELP program seems to have succeeded in teaching basic reading skills such as skimming and scanning and also helping students acquire basic English vocabulary. However, this does not seem to be sufficient to prepare students to tackle their college texts, according to many students and college faculty members. This seems to be in part due to the students' negative attitudes towards reading and their ineffective reading habits. It is also partly due to the fact that the program appears to be unsuccessful in making students acquire and retain new vocabulary, especially the technical terms. The fact that the vocabulary is not tested might contribute to the problem.

      Therefore, the following recommendations were made:

1) higher order skills should be addressed and more challenging reading tasks be used in the reading courses;
2) high frequency and academic vocabulary should be taught and reinforced in the IELP especially at the higher levels;
3) reading and writing courses should be more closely coordinated to reinforce vocabulary acquisition.

b. Speaking

The data from the survey suggests that students are better at monologues such as presentations and asking questions than dialogues. This happens perhaps because they have more control over the situation in the former. However, the observations and interviews provided contradicting evidence. That is, the majority of students were reluctant to participate orally in class probably due to shyness or lack of confidence to speak in English. The only occasion when students talked was in response to a teacher's question. Only a few students asked questions in class and the majority of them preferred to consult their peers in Arabic. In addition, the students' spoken language was characterized by single words and incomplete sentences. The students' difficulties might have resulted from speaking receiving less emphasis in the intensive program, based on comments from teachers. Currently, listening and speaking receive the least number of hours in the IELP and is not treated as an integral part of the curriculum, resulting in failure to achieve many of the objectives for listening and speaking. Therefore, the following recommendations were made:
1) increase opportunities for students to speak English in and out of class;
2) increase time allotted to the listening and speaking course;
3) introduce a pronunciation component that tackles students' prevalent pronunciation errors, possibly as part of the listening and speaking course.

c. Listening

Listening seems to be the most utilized and important language skill in college courses probably because most courses are lecture type. Although students feel that they are weaker in listening than in speaking, the observations and faculty interviews revealed the

opposite to be the case. However, it was practically hard for the college faculty and the researchers to measure the degree of the students' comprehension of lectures, and hence the impact of the IELP on their comprehension. In general, the students were dissatisfied with the listening materials in the IELP.

Therefore, the following recommendations were made:
1) increase opportunities for listening in and out of class;
2) increase time allotted to the listening and speaking course;
3) revise and improve listening materials and activities to make them more effective and relevant to the students' needs and interests;
4) Further research is needed to investigate the impact of the IELP on students' comprehension of lectures.

d. Writing

As evident from all the data sources, students face major challenges in writing. The majority of students and faculty felt that students are unable to write clearly organized and grammatically accepted essays. In addition, IELP teachers complained about the writing syllabus lacking logical progression and time for consolidation. They also contended that the material used for teaching writing lacks adequate contextualization and authenticity. Moreover, a look at the students' writing in the first credit English language courses shows that students make enormous errors most of which are at the sentence level. Because of this, many credit teachers spend a considerable amount of time teaching what students should have learned in the intensive program, resulting in cutting down the core material for the course.

Therefore, the following recommendations were made:
1) the writing syllabus and materials should be revised to rectify the concerns outlined above;
2) integrate writing with reading and grammar.

e. Grammar

The data showed conflicting findings with regards to the students' competence in grammar. These contradictions were foreseen at the outset of the project. The triangulation of data collection methods proved helpful in ensuring validity and reliability of the data. The

survey data showed that students had a good command of most of the grammar structures taught in the IELP. However, data from other methods clearly indicated students' inability to use many of the important and basic grammar points in production. In addition, IELP teachers were concerned about the way grammar is addressed in the program in terms of teaching methods and materials. They also voiced their worry that some of grammar structures are not relevant to the students' needs (e.g. third conditional and past perfect).

Therefore, the following recommendations were made:
1) the grammar syllabus should be more focused to allow sufficient time for practice;
2) grammar should be contextualized and integrated with reading and writing;
3) use more appropriate and interesting materials and methods for teaching grammar.

2. Objectives

There was a strong consensus among Language Center teachers that the level objectives are unrealistic given the time allowed for the IELP and neglect essential components of language learning such as vocabulary and speaking fluency. Due to the short duration of each level and the lack of appropriate material, many of the objectives are not accomplished. In addition, 42% of the students said they were not aware of the level objectives. This could be due to the fact that many of the objectives are not reinforced. Furthermore, some teachers noted that some of the objectives are not relevant to their needs and asked for more program specific objectives.

Therefore, the following recommendations were made:
a. make level objectives more realistic and manageable for the duration of each level;
b. set objectives away from textbooks used and base them on students' needs and abilities;
c. emphasize vocabulary acquisition and speaking throughout the program;
d. consider making the objectives more program specific especially at the higher levels.

The results from all these sources showed that students were under-prepared in many language and academic skills that are important for college study. In addition, it seemed that the intensive program needed to be reformed in

terms of its focus, objectives and content. However, the recommendations for change could not possibly be implemented all at once in the same magnitude. There were certain recommendations that could only be institutionalized over time and with the support and commitment of the university administration. In our capacity as curriculum officials, we could only immediately revise the matters related to curriculum. In addition, due to the limited size of the paper, I was only able to report certain changes.

In order to make the change manageable, it was done in a series of stages as described in the following sections.

Stage 1: Identifying and Defining Competencies

After the students' needs were identified, competencies were formed. We adopted a combination of approaches in the formation of competencies. These were task-based, skills-based and product-process approaches. The tasks constituted what the students were expected to do in their colleges. The skills referred to the underlying skills and processes needed to master the tasks (see Figure 1). They describe quite clearly what the learner has to learn and master to be able to attain the designed tasks or competencies. Finally, the product-process approach was used to combine the tasks and skills (Brown, 1995). That is to say, the outcomes were specified first followed by the processes or skills that would lead to the product or task.
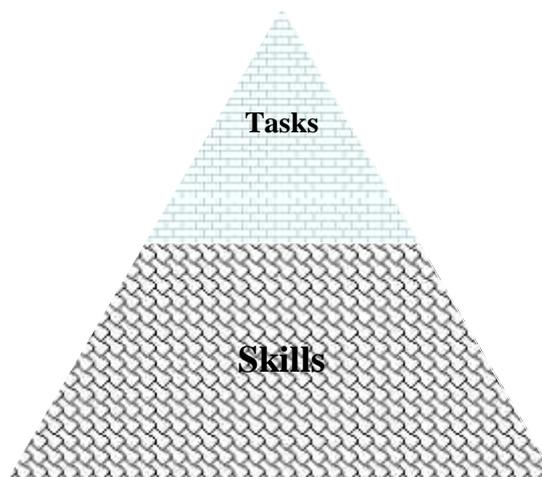
Figure 1: Skills as the basis for tasks.

A task was defined as any behavior students were expected to demonstrate as part of being successful students in college. A skill was described as the underlying ability that comprises the task. A certain task usually requires more than one skill.

We looked at the data we collected from the students and teachers. The data contained various skills. The first step was to determine the tasks that the students were expected to perform in their colleges. These tasks were called the performance objectives and they were divided into five major areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and research and study

skills. Performance objectives are precise output statements that describe the expected outcome of a certain amount and type of instruction or training. They are concerned with the ultimate product rather than the process of the learning process (see Figure 2). They were written following the well-known Robert Mager's (1962) approach to instructional objectives that breaks objectives into three major components, namely, behavior, conditions and criteria. In each of the objectives, the behavior is stated in action verbs so that it can be observed and assessed. The condition for the objectives is the amount of time students spend in the IELP which is an equivalent of about 800 hours of instruction. The criteria (or standards) to which the behavior is to be performed are indicated in each objective. The performance objectives are for the entire IELP, and not for any particular level. In other words, they state what students will be able to do upon the completion of the IELP. In addition, they describe the ability of the average student exiting the IELP.

These performance objectives were used as the basis for developing the skills which are concerned with the processes or abilities that will lead to the accomplishment of the tasks, as shown in Figure 2 below.

| **Input** Language knowledge and skills (Syllabi) | → | **Process** Skills or abilities (Cognitive, affective, psychomotor) | → | **Output** Performance objectives |
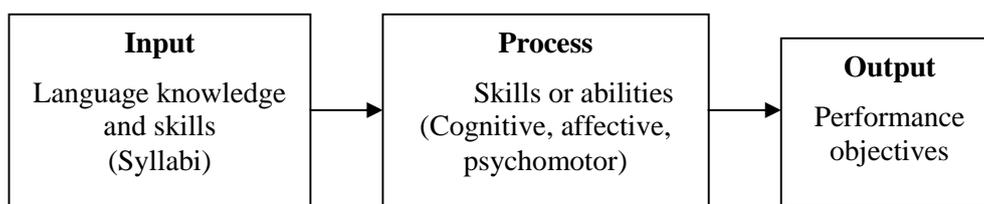
Figure 2: The relationship between performance objectives and learning tasks

After defining the performance objectives, the skills were identified. A list of all skills was created for each of the tasks. It was not realistic to teach all the skills for any of the tasks, but we tried to make sure that the intensive program covers all the necessary subskills that would ultimately lead to the acquisition of the performance objectives. Therefore, a number of criteria were adopted and these were related to progression, sophistication, multi-cognition, and measurability. Regarding progression, the skills for each task were distributed among the five proficiency levels so that they would lead to each other to ultimately allow for the attainment of the performance objective or task. We wanted to see the intensive program as one course spanning over a long period of time. The next step was to grade the skills according to their level of difficulty so that the skills that required more cognitive and physical work were allocated to the upper levels (see Figure 3 below).
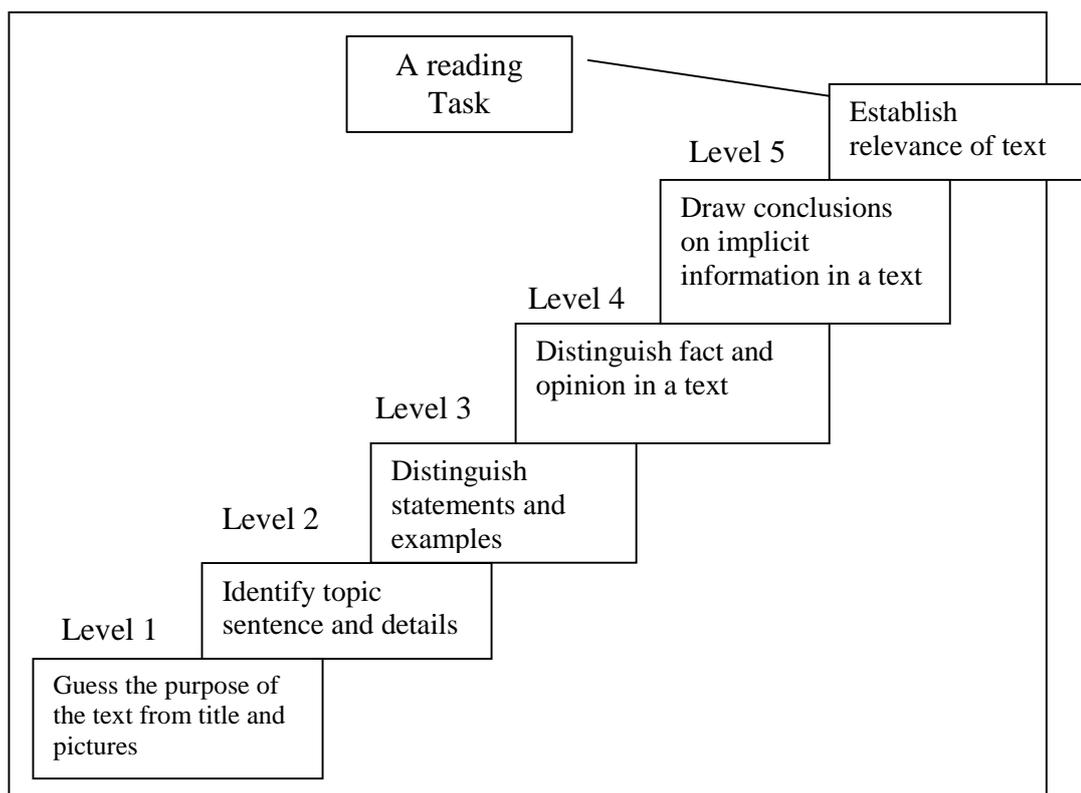
Figure 3: Skills for a reading task distributed among the five levels.

As for the multi-cognition criterion, the skills were graded according to the level of mental processing involved in them so that the program would not be limited to the recognition level. The result was a group of skills that were related to different types of cognitive processing, that is, remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating. Below are some example verbs for each of the cognitive processes to illustrate its meaning:

Remembering: Recognize, List, Name, Identify, Show, Define, Recognize, Recall, State, Visualize
Understanding: Summarize, Explain, Interpret, Describe, Compare, Paraphrase, Differentiate, Classify
Applying: Solve, Illustrate, Calculate, Use, Interpret, Relate, Manipulate, Apply, Modify
Analyzing: Analyze, Organize, Deduce, Contrast, Compare, Distinguish, Discuss, Plan, Devise
Evaluating: Evaluate, Choose, Estimate, Judge, Defend, Criticize

Hence, students, do, not only do recall of information they have learned but also manipulate the information in different ways that reflect their understanding and mastery of the knowledge and skills taught to them. The final criterion was related to the fact that the skill had to be something that could be observed and measured. Using these criteria, a number of skills were developed for each performance objective. The skills were expressed in simple and clear statements in order to make them comprehensible and accessible to students and teachers. They indicate the specific behavior expected of the student and may specify the condition and criteria for accomplishing the behavior depending on the type of task. The steps that were followed in developing the objectives and skills can be summarized as follows:

1. List **tasks** required in colleges divided into the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and academic/ research skills.
2. Identify **skills** required for each task.
3. Compare the **skills** with the old **objectives** in the intensive program curriculum and make necessary modifications (adding/deleting, refining, etc.)
4. Produce **a list of skills** to be covered in IELP for each of the four language skills.
5. **Divide the skill**s across the **five levels**.

Stage 2: Designing Syllabi

A syllabus was defined as a set of language knowledge and skills, topics, functions, and themes to which learners will be exposed. We adopted a narrow approach to syllabus design. That is, we considered a syllabus as the selection and grading of content to be taught (Nunan, 1988). The items in the syllabus form a basis for selecting and writing teaching materials as well as designing tests. However, for the purposes of our situation the syllabus included a chronological list or chart of functions and skills related to the English language for each level (see Appendix E). The syllabus was based on the level learning tasks and not on a particular textbook. It was supposed to be used by teachers and materials as a guide for using developing materials that suit the students' abilities at a certain level. In the past, there was only one type of linguistic syllabus that focused primarily on grammar items that were based on certain textbooks but this approach proved not to be effective.

For the purpose of our context, we developed a linguistic syllabus for all the levels. The linguistic syllabus included rhetorical functions with the necessary grammar structures. It also described the vocabulary items covered along with their collocations. For the listening and speaking courses, the linguistic syllabus listed the pronunciation elements taught at each level. The syllabi were written following the underlying philosophy that each level should be treated as an integrated course. That is to say, the syllabus for any level contains a number of related language items that should all be integrated across all the teaching materials of that level. This will ensure maximum cohesion and integration between the different components of a certain level as well as reinforcement and recycling of skills and language items. Such a flexible level structure will also make it possible in the future to change course names or content and even add new courses within the parameters of the syllabus of any particular level. In addition, the information in the syllabus for each level was based on the objectives of that level, relevant literature, and some teaching materials available on the market. The focus was on language items related to the curriculum objectives and also those proven to be problematic for Arab learners of English. In order to produce a 'local' curriculum or curriculum specific to our situation, we used data from teachers about students' needs and difficulties. One of the techniques used was to ask teachers to keep a diary of students' errors in spelling and pronunciation.

Stage 3: Reviewing and Selecting Teaching Materials

Materials writing and development was the next stage in the revision process. Once the performance objectives were formulated and the skills identified, we had to look for appropriate teaching materials. There were many challenges in making decisions about what material would best fit our needs and context. Prior to the revision study, a large quantity of materials already existed and could not be thrown. Therefore, we reviewed the existing materials and compared them against the new learning objectives and focus of the intensive program curriculum. We found out that some of the learning materials did not suit the new program. We noticed that the commercially published materials lacked many of objectives and syllabus elements. Consequently, we decided to take two actions. First, we chose a few new commercial textbooks to pilot their relevance and effectiveness. Second, we started a number of projects to develop materials to address certain aspects of the new curriculum such as vocabulary, study skills and reading. We are currently in the process of forming a professional materials writers group to take the responsibility of developing materials suitable for our context. However, finding and training qualified teachers to write

materials requires tremendous time and resources. If we are unable to find the appropriate people or cannot provide training we might have to change the curriculum in the future. As mentioned before, it has not been possible to find a perfect match for our objectives and syllabus.

Stage 4: Introducing the Revised Curriculum

As is the case with the introduction of any new or revised curriculum, implementation is one of the hardest stages during which all principles and theories are put under test and scrutiny by teachers. The curriculum will not be fully realized and implemented unless teachers are aware of the situations and its needs and limitations (Markee, 1997). In our situation, we decided to phase the new curriculum in incrementally in order not to cause a lot of disruption in the current system. That is to say, in Fall 2006, only the first two levels will be introduced and then the rest of the levels will follow gradually. For the sake of a smooth transition between the old and new curriculum, we have conducted a series of workshops for the teachers where we explained the changes and the implementation timeframe. It is still premature to predict what impact the new curriculum will have on students and teachers.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have attempted to describe our efforts in revising the curriculum in a major English language program in a higher education institution. One of the prominent features of the new curriculum is that it focuses on the students' immediate needs by targeting the real life tasks expected of students in their colleges and them identifying the underpinning skills or abilities. The process was full of challenges and difficulties that had to be dealt with at all the stages of the operation. Even though this article explained curriculum reform in a specific context, I strongly believe that other situations will be able to benefit from the process through which this was conducted.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IELP Revision Project
Class Observation Form

Observer ----------------------------- Nationality --------------------------------Course ----------------------------- College ----------------------------

		Statement	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Comments (please write your comments about any of the items)
Students' Behaviour	1	Students take notes.	1	2	3	4	5	
	2	Students ask questions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	3	Students follow instructions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	4	Students need clarification of instructions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	5	Students participate in the class discussion.	1	2	3	4	5	
	6	Students read aloud.	1	2	3	4	5	
	7	Students ask for meanings of words.	1	2	3	4	5	
	8	Students have to do presentations.	1	2	3	4	5	
	9	Students write in class.	1	2	3	4	5	Write what?
	10	Students skim a text for the main ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	

	11	Students scan a text for specific information.	1	2	3	4	5	
	12	Students answer comprehension questions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	13	Students follow lectures.	1	2	3	4	5	
Lecturers' Behaviour	14	The lecturer uses written support.	1	2	3	4	5	
	15	The lecturer involves students in discussions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	16	The lecturer asks questions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	17	The lecturer checks comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	
	18	The lecturer repeats instructions.	1	2	3	4	5	
	19	The lecturer clarifies terms and concepts.	1	2	3	4	5	
	20	The lecturer simplifies the language used.	1	2	3	4	5	
	21	The lecturer uses Arabic.	1	2	3	4	5	

22. The ratio of student talk to teacher talk is:
a. 30% - 70%   b. 50% - 50%   c. 70% - 30%

Comments:

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Appendix B

Student Survey

The Language Centre is conducting a survey. The purpose of this survey is to find out what you think of the quality of the Intensive Programme courses that you took. This survey can only be useful if the Language Centre can obtain your completely free and honest opinion. Your feedback will be taken into account in the Language Centre's continuing effort to improve the quality of the educational programmes.

The information you provide will remain confidential and will only be used for research purposes

Background information

Tick (√) as appropriate

Gender	Male	Female		
Age	18-20	21-23	24-26	27+
College	Arts	Education	CCE	
	EES	EES		
	Tourism	Science		
	AGR	Engineering	Science	Medicine

Year of Study   First   Second   Third

Have you lived in an English Speaking Community

          Yes   No

Do your parents speak English?   Mother   Father

                                                             Yes   No   Yes   No

Have you had any English language course(s) outside SQU?

          Yes   No

If yes, please specify length of course

Have you attended English medium Schools?

          Yes   No

If yes, please specify

a) Name of school   --

b) Length of time   --

Appendix C
The Survey Statements

I started the intensive programme at level: 1   2   3   4   5   *(Please circle)*

1 Poor   2 Fair   3 Good   4 Excellent

No	Statement	1	2	3	4
1	I can obtain the overall meaning from a reading text very quickly.				
2	I can find specific information from a reading text.				
3	I can guess the meaning of new vocabulary from context.				
4	I can answer questions on a given reading text independently.				
5	I can understand text(s) from the internet.				
6	I can discuss topics orally during a class.				
7	I can ask questions during lectures.				
8	I can do presentations effectively.				
9	I can answer questions asked by the instructor.				
10	I can identify the parts of a lecture.				
11	I can understand oral presentations delivered by peers/tutors.				
12	I can take notes during lectures effectively.				
13	I can understand lectures with little written support from the tutors.				
14	I can write reports.				
15	I can use first, second, however, in contrast, etc when writing paragraphs.				
16	I can write an essay of more than 300 words.				
17	I can organize the parts of an academic piece of writing.				
18	I use **verb+s** correctly. (He kick**s** the ball.)				
19	I can use relative pronouns (who, that, which, etc) to combine sentences.				
20	I can use articles (a, an, the) appropriately.				
21	I can use correct tenses in writing/speaking.				
22	I can use the passive voice correctly.				
23	The Intensive Programme encouraged me to think rather than memorise.				

24	I was aware of the objectives of the intensive courses I took.				
25	I was well prepared for the credit programme.				
26	Overall, the intensive programme helped me improve my English.				
27	I found the self-access centre very useful in learning English.				
28	If I got credit hours for the Intensive courses, I would have done better				

29. What is your **cumulative GPA**? (please circle the range in which your GPA falls)

a. 1 – 1.99   b. 2 – 2.99   c. 3 – 3.99   d. 4.0

Appendix D
Open-ended Questions
You May Answer the Following Questions in Arabic

1. What did you find most useful about the intensive course?

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2. What did you find least useful about the intensive course?

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3. Any other comments

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Appendix E

Syllabus Template

Rationale
Each level should be seen as a course. This will ensure maximum cohesion and integration between the different components of a certain level as well as reinforcement and recycling of skills and language items. Such a flexible level structure will also make it possible in the future to change course names or content and even add new courses within the parameters of a particular level.

Syllabus: The syllabus specifies the kind of language knowledge and skills students are expected to master after completing the course.

Each level syllabus will consist of the following components:

Learning tasks: Statements that specify the types of tasks and language knowledge expected of students at a certain level for each of the four language skills.

Rhetorical functions: Writing functions taught at each level (e.g. description of an object).

Grammar rules: Grammar rules suitable at this level. Priority goes to the rules that serve the language functions in all four language skills. The grammar points outlined in the syllabus below are the ones to be taught and tested. Grammar rules needed in speaking only are separated.

Sound patterns: The pronunciation elements to be taught at each level.

Vocabulary items and spelling rules: The vocabulary, word collocations, and spelling rules to be taught at each level. The vocabulary items will be both content and function words. The actual content words to be taught at each level will be determined based on corpus analysis. However, the function words are specified in the syllabus of each level. They correspond with the rhetorical functions and grammar rules for the level.

Input and output texts: Input texts refer to reading and listening texts used in the teaching material, whereas output texts refer to texts expected of students to produce in writing. Information about text difficulty and size for

both input and output types will be determined based on findings from the corpus analysis.

Level Syllabus

The information in the syllabus is based on the learning tasks, relevant literature, and some teaching materials available on the market. The focus is on language items related to the curriculum objectives and also those proven to be problematic for Arab learners of English.

Rhetorical functions	Grammar rules	Sound patterns	Vocabulary items and spelling rules	Input and output texts