Title:

EFL in Higher Education: Designing a Flexible Content-Based Curriculum at

University-Level

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Abstract

The current trend of globalization and the developments in information technology have boosted the role of English, which has become a universal language of knowledge and communication. In this demanding and challenging information era in which we live, EFL instruction at higher education institutions needs to offer the students more than general proficiency in English. They need to make the connection between English and students' future careers. However, it is not an easy task to design a curriculum at university level to address these issues. This article describes a content-based language program developed for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) at a Turkish university. It aims to illustrate the rationale and the process of designing a flexible content-based curriculum for university students. After a brief introduction to the place of English at Turkish universities, it discusses the limitations and inadequacies of the previous foreign language curriculum as well as the principles that the new program is based on at Uludag University.

The curriculum presented in the article is intended to be a model for teaching EFL or other foreign languages at higher education institutions.

Introduction

Today, we witness an increasing awareness of the importance of learning foreign languages to successfully manage the current trend of globalization in the world (Oleksak, 2007). It is quite obvious that developments in information technology since the second half of the twentieth century have facilitated the access to knowledge produced elsewhere, which has contributed greatly to the globalization of knowledge, communication, social norms, values, and production/consumption habits. As a result of this, we find ourselves living in an information era where knowledge is power. The most crucial vehicle in the process of producing knowledge, reaching the produced knowledge and utilizing knowledge is, of course, language. This strong connection between knowledge and language makes it necessary to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) in those societies that speak other languages because English has become a universal language of knowledge and communication.

One of the basic components involved in this process of globalization in all societies is, of course, university. Universities, which are expected to be in continuous interaction with universal knowledge, have the responsibility to educate students who are knowledgeable, motivated and equipped with the necessary skills to reach new sources of information for life-long professional development (Delanty, 2002; Fuller, 2003; Kuklinski, 2001). While designing their instructional curriculum, universities need to consider the connection

between knowledge and language mentioned above, and enact dynamic and necessary reforms in order to reflect this onto the education they offer. In this sense, it becomes unavoidable for non-English speaking societies to incorporate an EFL program into their higher education in order to share the knowledge produced and to reach knowledge produced elsewhere. Integrating EFL teaching across the curriculum at higher education institutions is a challenging task and may have various formats. With the globalization and the increasing demands of national and international competitive job markets, EFL instruction at universities has to provide more than general proficiency in English. Students need to be trained to use English language for the special purposes required by their future careers. In other words, EFL instruction at universities needs to establish the strong connection between the target language and the subject matter of students' future careers.

These issues raise the question of whether the EFL program in one's own context incorporates the crucial features mentioned above. Unfortunately, the program at the higher education institution where I teach was far from having the characteristics of such a program. Indeed, we can talk about mainly two dimensions of the motivation for designing a new curriculum. The first reason related to the ineffectiveness and the failure of the existing EFL program. The inadequacy of the program could be observed in terms of the content, materials, texts and resources, and in terms of the number and quality of teaching staff. The second reason for the search for a new program was related with the improvements and the educational reform that the university administration has planned to do. The ultimate goal of the reform was to increase the quality of education, prepare the university for the international

accreditation process, fulfill the requirements of European Union University Quality Culture, participate in student exchange projects with European countries, and acquire a respected and preferred university identity. In this reform process, teaching English was considered crucial for the students' future careers. Students should be competent in reading, writing, understanding and speaking English, especially in topics related to their major fields of study. Competence is defined as "the ability to produce and understand the sentences of a given language, and identify ambiguous and deviant sentences" (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p.75). The notion of competence needs to be clarified for the purpose of this article, especially after we discuss and consider English as an international language (EIL) in the Introduction section. Recent research questions the validity of the notion of ideal native speaker competence that Chomsky (1965) has proposed. Nunn (2007) redefines competence for EIL as a holistic, global and international concept, and argues that institutions which aim educational excellence in an international field need to establish a balance between international and local definitions of competence. Alptekin (2002) finds native speaker competence utopian, unrealistic and constraining, and indicates "for language to be authentic in its routine pragmatic functioning, it needs to be localized within a particular discourse community" (p. 61). The importance of community in defining the notion of competence has been emphasized by Nunn (2007) as well, who states "Competence is linked to the notion of community. In any local context competence needs of students can be related to the different communities with and within which they will need to communicate" (p. 101). It is pointed out that a more holistic explanation of language competence would help grasp the characteristics of various local and

international communities that the users of EIL communicate in. The implications of this framework for the definition of competence on language pedagogy have been discussed (Acar, 2007; Alptekin, 2002; Hyde, 1998; Nunn, 2005). Alptekin (2002) states "a new pedagogical model is needed to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication,… the EIL pedagogy should be one of global appropriacy and local appropriation" (p.63). Learners are expected to have the competence to use language effectively and appropriately in various contexts (Spolsky, 1989). Developing learners' ability to use a language effectively for their communicative purposes in a variety of professional and social contexts requires learning environments which emphasize communicative, authentic and meaningful use of target language, and active learner involvement (Finney, 2002).

Upon the observations of problems in the existing program (see the Section below) and the educational reform desired in this area, the university administration appointed me to develop a new program to teach EFL to university students, which would be gradually implemented in all the departments.

EFL at Turkish Universities and Uludag University

There are about 150 universities in Turkey (as of December 2010). The majority of them are state universities. In the 1990s, we saw an increase in the number and quality of private universities as well. Only in a few of the state universities, such as the Middle East Technical University and Bosphorus University, is the medium of instruction English. These universities have been established in

cooperation with universities and organizations in the United States. In private universities such as Bilkent, Beykent, Isik and Izmir University of Economics, English is also used as the medium of instruction. In other state or private universities, not all but some departments and faculties offer English-medium instruction. Therefore, we can talk about mainly three types of universities in regard to the English instruction offered:

- Universities that use English as a medium of instruction in all their academic programs

- Universities that use English as a medium of instruction in some of their academic programs

- Universities that use only the native language in all their academic programs

The majority of the universities use the first language (L1), Turkish, in their academic programs, and English is taught as a foreign language in separate courses. This is, of course, natural if we consider the rationale for conducting higher education in the native language. However, it is obvious that universities using English as medium of instruction have more advantages because students graduating from these universities are equipped with a richer education if we take into consideration the connection between knowledge and language discussed in the introduction. This reality gives the L1-instructed universities the responsibility of teaching English through separate English language courses, which are limited in terms of weekly hours, their content and goals.

Uludag University is one of the largest state universities in Turkey as it consists of eleven faculties, fourteen vocational schools and about forty thousand students. The medium of instruction and study at Uludag University is

Turkish. In order to fulfill the foreign language requirement, a separate EFL course was offered for only two hours a week during the first year. However, this basic language course fell short of meeting students' needs in learning the English language. The major problems can be stated as follows:

1. EFL teaching meant just a two-hour English course which was offered during the first year. There was not any other course or activity related to EFL in the following years of university education.

2. Students were not grouped according to their proficiency levels in English. Students at different proficiency levels followed the same syllabus, which consisted of beginner – low intermediate level materials.

3. Classrooms were too crowded. There were over eighty students in one class, seated in a conference room.

4. There was not adequate equipment or other materials, except for the textbook, that would support language teaching. Occasionally, instructors brought a tape recorder; however, only students sitting at the front could hear it. Students sitting in the back row could not even hear the instructor.

5. This two-hour English course aimed to teach basic general English for all students in different fields of study, and it mostly emphasized grammar and vocabulary knowledge. However, students needed to build on it and learn English for professional purposes at advanced levels so they could use English effectively when they start their careers after graduation.

6. Teaching staff were not adequately qualified and did not have the vision or   motivation to implement more challenging syllabi.

During the initial phases of the educational reform which aims to make the university one of the most promising and serious ones in the country, it was emphasized that students graduating from different departments should be able to use English effectively in their future careers. Thus, teaching professional English became the major objective of the new EFL program and it was believed that students needed to come to a certain proficiency level before they started using English for professional purposes; i.e. for their future careers. For this purpose, the following beliefs and assumptions underlined the new EFL curriculum:

- Developing students' proficiency and ability to use English effectively in a variety of contexts related to their future careers,

- Increasing the quality of education by creating opportunities for students to utilize resources and materials written in English in their own majors.

- Increasing students' opportunities in the job market in terms of technology and know-how, and the economy and commercial areas.

- Competing with more prestigious universities in recruiting successful high quality students who are tempted to choose universities that offer all English-medium instruction.

- Adopting English as a prerequisite for the accreditation process implemented by the university.

- Increasing opportunities for student and staff exchanges with universities in other countries

- Encouraging students and staff to take part in international joint projects in their fields.

When we examine the motivation and the assumptions behind the attempt to design a new EFL curriculum in this context, we can see that a content-based language program would be suitable to provide opportunities for all students with different majors of specialty to use English effectively in their future careers. The new program was expected to be flexible so that it could be implemented in all majors, but adopting the content, materials and tasks of specific majors. Content-based instruction (CBI) where content learning and language learning are integrated presents a valuable option for teaching foreign languages at universities. Content-based language instruction, an influential approach in language pedagogy, aims to develop competence in a foreign language and improve the knowledge of a subject matter at the same time.

Content-Based Language Teaching

CBI allows for creating environments where learners can be effectively involved in using the target language for various communicative and meaningful purposes. CBI is defined as "the integration of language teaching aims with subject matter instruction" (Snow, 2001, p. 303). Grabe and Stoller (1997) indicate that combining the development of language with content knowledge enhances the learning process. They argue that content-based language instruction is supported by research done within the framework of educational and cognitive psychology and point to Anderson's research (1990, 1993) on learning and processing which emphasizes the importance of coherent and meaningful information for better learning and recall. Similarly, Singer (1990) emphasizes that when learners are exposed to thematically organized materials they learn and remember better the information presented. In CBI,

materials are naturally presented around certain topics focusing on coherent and meaningful information as well as relevant language learning activities in a context. CBI continually provides opportunities for learners to use their knowledge of content area and target language in increasingly complex tasks. Integration of language and content provides a meaningful context for learners to foster their academic and cognitive development as well as the skills and proficiency in the target language.

The development of CBI is derived from immersion programs in Canada to teach French as a second language to English speaking children in schools. We observe three types of immersion programs: early immersion where the first three or four grades of schooling are done completely in the second language; delayed immersion where the fourth and fifth grades receive instruction in the second language, and late immersion where students in the seventh and eighth grades receive all instruction in the second language. The programs are also categorized as total immersion or partial immersion depending on the amount of instruction done in the second language (Genesee, 1985). In total immersion, all the instruction is conducted in the second language; while partial immersion means 30-70% of instruction in the target language. The immersion model has been adapted in the United States to enrich the school programs in terms of educational, cultural and linguistic levels, to establish a racial balance and to achieve bilingualism in minority populations. Many programs at secondary school and university levels have been designed to address the needs of learners with limited English proficiency (Cantoni-Harvey, 1987; Crandall, 1987; Crandall & Kaufman, 1998; Met, 1998; Snow & Brinton, 1988; Snow & Kamhi-Stein, 1997; Wegrzecka-Kowalewski, 1997). Models of content-based programs are distinguished from each other by the setting, by the instructional level and by the

degree of emphasis on language and content (Snow, 2001). Some of these models offer the majority of the education through the foreign language while the amount of time the foreign language is used for instruction might be much less in other models of content-based language teaching. They are also different from each other in terms of the degree of emphasis on language and content since some are more content-driven and others are more language-driven. Another variable is the setting; that is, whether the target language is used naturally in the environment or it is taught as a foreign language in educational institutions.

Among various models of content-based language programs, theme-based, CALLA and Language-Content-Task models constitute the basis of the new EFL program designed for Uludag University.

Theme-Based Model is organized around selected topics from one content area or from across the curriculum to develop students' general academic skills. Content is chosen from various topics according to students' interests. Stoller and Grabe (1997) propose the Six T's Approach for theme-based instruction, which include theme, topics, texts, threads, tasks and transitions. Teachers extract language learning activities from selected themes and topics (Snow, 2001). It is usually found in EFL contexts and taught by an EFL teacher or team taught with a content specialist (Davies, 2003).

CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach) is a strategy-based instruction that combines academic language development, content area instruction and explicit learning strategy instruction for intermediate and advanced ESL students. It aims to improve academic language skills of ESL learners who have developed social communicative skills in the target language, ESL learners who have academic language skills in their native language but need to transfer them to the target

language, or bilingual students who have achieved social communicative skills but lack academic language skills in either language. In CALLA approach, content determines the academic language selection and the learning strategies to be taught. Learner autonomy is encouraged through the development of independent learning skills.

LCT (Language-Content-Task) integrates language, content and relevant tasks into the curriculum. The language component focuses on semantics, syntax, pragmatics and functions while content incorporates curriculum topics; tasks aim to improve procedural knowledge (Short, 2000). For example, when the **content** is about plant and animal cells, and the **task** is to use a microscope to view, describe and compare plant and animal cells, the **language** component of the lesson emphasizes vocabulary for cell parts, grammatical structures for describing and comparing, and the development of reading skills in the target language.

These models are by no means the only possibilities for designing a content-based language curriculum. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) mention the possibility of new formats and different combinations of models and point out that the configuration of a model may differ significantly depending on the setting of the program. They indicate that the features of different models may blend together. Indeed, we can observe numerous examples in recent years that introduce well-designed and successfully-implemented content-based courses and programs in various settings. A good example is given by Adamson (2006), who used a combination of teacher transmission and student collaboration for a content-based course on sociolinguistics at college level in an EFL context. Another recent example took place in Japan. Lingley (2006) integrated a task-based approach with content-based instruction for intermediate-level EFL

learners to overcome the difficulties in teaching a content-based course on Canadian Studies.

The New Content-Based EFL Curriculum

The new content-based EFL curriculum at Uludag University is based on the following general principles:

a) Gradual introduction / integration of content-based instruction

b) Text and task authenticity

c) Flexibility

d) Learner and teacher autonomy

e) Integration of technology

f) Teacher involvement in the program design and development

The new curriculum has two major parts:

- Intensive English Program (IEP): An introduction of CBI is done in the Intensive English Program for students at intermediate and upper intermediate levels. Students at beginner and pre-intermediate levels attend courses to improve their proficiency in English.

- Content-Based Program (CBP): When students finish the Intensive English Program successfully, they start their academic departments. At this stage, a combination of Theme-Based, CALLA and Language-Content-Task models is implemented for integrating content learning with language learning.

The new curriculum incorporates a combination of several models because it is spread throughout the higher education of students and involves several different stages. Each part is explained in detail indicating the goals and the

content of courses. The major parts of the curriculum can be seen in the following figure:

A- INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAM (IEP)

(Students attend IEP before they start their intended academic departments)

a) For students at beginner (30 hours/a week), elementary (30 h/w) and pre-intermediate (25 h/w) levels:

Intensive English Courses: Language courses taught by language specialists to improve overall proficiency of students

b) For intermediate (25 h/w) and upper intermediate (20 h/w) students:

1) Intensive English Courses: Language courses taught by language specialists to improve overall proficiency of students

2) Introduction to CBI: Language-driven courses focusing on language learning strategies and on various themes taught by language specialists only. Project work is included.

B- CONTENT-BASED PROGRAM (CBP)

(Students take the following content-based courses after they start their intended academic departments)

1) Theme-Based Courses: Advanced Writing

Advanced Reading and Speaking

Language-driven courses taught by a language specialist and supported by content specialist

2) Language-Content-Task Courses: English for Professionals I

English for Professionals II

English in the Workplace

3) CALLA Course:	Research Paper
Content-driven courses taught by content specialist and language specialist together	

Figure 1. The Content-Based EFL Curriculum at L1-Medium University

A- Intensive English Program (IEP)

The IEP is offered in a separate building at the School of Foreign Languages. All students attend this program for one year before they start their intended academic departments. The goal of this program is to bring students at different proficiency levels to upper-intermediate level in English and to offer an introduction to content-based instruction through topics and projects they undertake in and outside class. They are prepared to take content-based courses when they start their intended academic departments.

The School of Foreign Languages administers two exams at the beginning of the academic year. The first one is a proficiency exam that is administered to all students. Students who pass the proficiency exam are considered proficient in English and allowed to take content-based English courses while attending their own academic departments. The School of Foreign Languages has the right to waive the proficiency requirement if a student verifies her/his proficiency with a passing grade in other exams such as TOEFL, IELTS, CPE, and FCE. The second exam is a placement exam administered for students who

cannot achieve a passing grade in the proficiency exam. The results form the basis for placing the students at different proficiency levels. Students are grouped in different levels according to the results of the placement exam. A level coordinator is assigned for each proficiency level to keep the courses offered integrated and balanced. For each class, there is a class tutor who usually teaches the greatest number of hours in that particular class. The courses offered in the IEP focus on target language skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English, and vocabulary and grammar. Students at the intermediate and upper intermediate levels are exposed to topics of their future departments and assigned to do projects of their interests. The School of Foreign Languages has a library and a computer lab for students. For teachers, there are a resource room, a materials development room and a testing room.

Brown (1995) suggests that curriculum planners should avoid taking the position of an expert who knows what is good for the program and to seek the views of various interest groups. The curriculum proposed here includes different committees of EFL teachers responsible for important aspects of the program. Teachers take part in different committees responsible for different aspects of the program. These committees include testing, program development, materials development, professional development and student life improvement:

Testing Committee: This group of teachers prepares and administers all the exams and tests given to the students.

Program Development Committee: This committee is responsible for designing the weekly program and tracking whether teachers have any problems in the implementation of the curriculum.

Materials Development Committee: This committee's responsibility is to develop or adopt materials appropriate for each level.

Professional Development Committee: This committee is responsible for diagnosing the issues and topics that teachers need and want to focus on and for arranging seminars, workshops and other academic events that help teachers develop professionally.

Student Life Improvement Committee: This group of teachers deals with activities, issues and problems of students and aims to improve students' academic and social lives at the university.

The curriculum of the IEP was planned to involve both in-class work and out-of-class work. These operate as follows: **In-class work** consists of courses in reading and vocabulary, writing, grammar, listening and speaking taught in class. Students at each level take four mid-term exams and numerous quizzes in one semester. At the end of the academic year, successful students are allowed to take the proficiency exam. If they get a passing grade in the proficiency exam, they register at their intended academic departments. Those who are not successful in the coursework are not allowed to take the proficiency exam. They can attend the summer school and take the proficiency exam given at the end of the summer school. If they are successful, they can go on with their education in their departments; if not, they have to repeat the IEP. **Out-of-class work** encourages students to do extensive reading, individual and group projects that supplement in-class topics and issues. Besides, students are encouraged to study in the computer lab where they have access to the Internet and to authentic materials and visual activities. The progress of each student is tracked by class tutors. If needed, extra tutoring hours for low level students are

organized. They are not allowed to take advanced level content-based courses unless they succeed in the Intensive English Program and pass the proficiency exam.

Content-Based Program (CBP)

The second part of the curriculum is the content-based EFL program. After students successfully finish the IEP at the School of Foreign Languages and pass the proficiency exam, they take content-based courses in English starting in the freshman year while taking their academic classes. Each of these courses is for four hours a week. Students need to pass a course in order to take another one in the following semester. Otherwise, they have to repeat the same course. In other words, the courses are a prerequisite for one another. The CBP aims to enhance students' use of English, oral and written, in their future careers. In this sense, the materials covered are chosen in accordance with students' future careers. For example, if they are medical students, topics covered in all the activities and materials are on medicine.

The content and the materials for the courses are determined by the language instructors together with the faculty of the specific department. Although the courses are conducted mainly by the departments' teaching staff, they cooperate to organize the courses together. The ultimate goal of the courses is to equip students with the language skills needed to read, write, understand and speak in English in the areas and topics related to their future careers. The CBP emphasizes teaching English for professional purposes. The common goal is to integrate content teaching with language teaching. The aim is to use the subject matter of the students to develop students' academic skills, to improve

their foreign language skills and at the same to teach the subject matter to them. The content-based curriculum focuses on preparing students to have strong proficiency in English and to perform successfully in content areas using English. Considering the objectives of the program, the student population and the setting, our model is more language-driven in the beginning and gradually becomes more content-driven. The foreign language is used in the content-based language classes. The ultimate goal of the Program is to equip students with the language skills that will enable them to use English effectively in a range of written and oral contexts related to their professional lives, and to help them use all kinds of resources in English to become knowledgeable and intellectual individuals in the subject matters in which they specialize. The first two courses treat language skills separately. However, the integration of language skills is achieved in the courses students take afterwards such as Professional English and English at the Workplace. Besides the integration of skills, there is a focus on authentic tasks students might encounter in their real professional lives. The required content-based courses originally included the following ones:

Advanced Writing Skills in English: The goal of this course is to reinforce students' writing skills, to do remedial structure and vocabulary work, and to improve their summarizing and paraphrasing skills focusing on different modes of written language and various topics related to their subject matters. The focus is on the language more than the content. This course is offered for four hours a week during the first and second semesters in their departments.

Advanced Reading and Speaking Skills in English: In this course, students are expected to improve their reading strategies to understand advanced texts on the topics related to their fields and be able to conduct debates,

participate in discussions and do individual or group oral presentations on the subjects they read. It is a language-driven course although a considerable amount of time is spent on the content as well. This course is offered for four hours a week during the third semester.

English for Professional Purposes I: This course is content-driven and follows the basic principles of content-based instruction. In that sense, students focus on the content by reading, listening, speaking and writing about their subject matters. Task types in this course include *information management* where students sift information into different categories, or *hands-on activities* where students manipulate information through games and experiential activities (Nunan, 2001). Professional authenticity of the tasks and the texts covered is crucial. Students improve their terminology and ability to follow the literature on the topics related with their future profession. This course is offered for four hours a week during the fourth semester of their education.

English for Professional Purposes II: Since this course is a continuation of the course offered in the previous semester, the same principles for the task types and texts are implemented in this course. Students are expected to reinforce their content knowledge and language skills to handle the written and oral texts in English related to their future profession. This course is offered for four hours a week during their fifth semester in the department.

English in the Workplace: The goal of this course is to equip students with advanced oral and written communication skills in English and the comprehensive content knowledge they will need in their relations with foreign individuals and institutions after they graduate and start pursuing their professions. They are expected to carry out tasks similar to the ones they will

face in their future careers. This course is offered for four hours a week during their sixth semester.

Research Paper in English: Students are equipped with the necessary research skills to prepare and write a research paper on a topic of their interest related to their future careers. The majors of the students determine the requirements for such a paper because content-based academic writing is incorporated within this course (Tutunis, 2000). The outcome of the course is a kind of graduation thesis on the content of students' specific fields. Since this course is CALLA-oriented, students are encouraged to focus on the development of academic English as well as the content area and learning strategies. Strategy instruction is an integral part of this course to. It is offered for four hours a week during the seventh and eighth semesters.

The content and materials to be used in the courses are determined together with the faculty of each department. The courses "Advanced Writing Skills, and Advanced Reading and Speaking Skills in English" are more language-driven and taught mainly by language instructors, whereas the other courses are increasingly more content-focused and taught by the faculty in departments with the help of language instructors. Language instructors receive guidance and help from the faculty on the topics and materials to be covered in the courses. In turn, content instructors (the faculty of the departments) are supported by language instructors in terms of the language work to be done in the courses. The common purpose of these courses is to improve students' language skills in order to use them for professional purposes.

The program outlined above has been approved by the University Senate. However, the Higher Education Council requested some modifications

regarding the first year (first and second semesters) and the last year (seventh and eighth semesters). The courses "Advanced Writing Skills and Research Paper in English" have been removed from the program indicating that students are required to take the two-hour foreign language course in the first year and they are required to prepare a thesis in Turkish in the last year of their education. The Council thought students would be overloaded with two English courses in the first year and another research paper in English in the last year. The final version of the content-based EFL program has been approved and recommended by the Higher Education Council as a model curriculum for all other universities with L1-medium instruction in Turkey since 2002-2003 academic year.

Going beyond the Curriculum

The guiding principle of the whole program is to encourage both learners and teachers to be autonomous. One of the important concepts that the program tries to establish is learner autonomy. Learners need to go beyond classroom instruction, take responsibility for their own learning and plan for their learning process in the future after they leave the intensive English program at the School of Foreign Languages. For this purpose, students are trained to acquire and use effective language learning strategies. Teacher autonomy is as important as learner autonomy. Raya (2007) indicates that teacher autonomy is maintained when institutions promote teacher involvement in decision-making process, increase opportunities for peer collaboration and discussion of real school problems, and encourage teacher responsibility and choice in the teaching process. In other words, for teachers, being autonomous means to be

able to make their own informed decisions in their teaching, to be able to address needs and problems as they arise in the classroom and to be able to go beyond the written program/curriculum if/when necessary. For this purpose, teachers in this program were introduced to various ways for professional development to achieve autonomy. These included action research, peer and self-observation, reflective journals and utilizing technology to improve their teaching. Seminars and workshops were arranged to present information on teacher autonomy.

Feedback from Students and Instructors

This section includes the first set of feedback on the education at the School of Foreign Languages. Since the other parts of the curriculum had not started fully at the time of collecting data, we do not have feedback for the other parts of the curriculum. At the end of the first year, instructors and the students were asked to provide feedback about the curriculum. The following issues were observed to be addressed immediately:

Students split into two major groups in terms of their level of motivation. One group was motivated and really wanted to learn English. They believed English was necessary for their future careers and for better positions they planned to have in the future. The other group's aim was just to pass the English courses and concentrate more on their own majors. Students thought that they would not need English later in their education because the medium of instruction was not English. In order to address this problem, an orientation week was planned to increase students' interest and motivation in learning English. The benefits of learning English were explained explicitly to students.

It has been observed that students' grammar, vocabulary and reading skills were quite good. However, they were very weak in speaking, listening and writing skills. This was the general profile of most EFL learners. In order to solve this problem, the number of class hours in speaking, listening and writing was planned to be increased; and students were encouraged to do out-of-class projects in these problem areas.

Students did not show much interest in the topics covered in reading textbooks. For this reason, the books were supplemented with extra reading materials that students chose.

Writing was a difficult skill for most students. The students needed to go beyond paragraph writing and produce longer pieces of various genres. A workbook of extra materials for writing was planned to be prepared. Self-assessment was introduced to help the students become more autonomous and confident in their writing.

Preparing instructional materials for the content-based courses is quite challenging. In EFL contexts, students have limited opportunities to be exposed to the authentic language. A number of criteria for selecting the materials was planned to be incorporated into the curriculum. The important criteria for material selection were task and text authenticity. Materials should be:

- authentic and real-life situations that students would face during their professional experiences in the future.
- diverse in terms of sources and genre.

For this purpose, relevant websites, terminology glossaries, current news, source books, slides and worksheets were planned to be used more effectively.

Designing appropriate instructional activities and tasks related with the materials was a challenging area that needed special attention.

Another important issue relates to the use of educational technology. For this purpose, the number and use of computer labs were planned to be increased in order to promote computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and expose students to authentic materials through the internet. Teachers were asked to do research on the topic and share the results with their colleagues during a workshop. They were also encouraged to improve themselves on this topic since CALL was crucial for students to be autonomous in learning a second language. Use of e-learning was planned to be explored in detail so that a combination of e-learning and face-to-face sessions could be conducted.

Conclusion

The content-based curriculum has its rewards and challenges. It is rewarding because it provides a flexible framework to design a curriculum for students of different majors at a university setting. At the same time, it is challenging because it requires a lot of thinking and effort to coordinate the program as a whole and to find materials and implement the courses in each specific department.

With these points in mind, the program presented in this paper aims to give an idea about the possibilities of designing similar or different content-based EFL programs at universities. Students who finish the content-based language program successfully are expected to be proficient in both the target language and the subject matter they have studied for their profession. They can update their knowledge since they get access to the latest developments in their fields through the sources most of

which are written in English. As an international language, English is perhaps the most effective tool for the globalization of the world, bringing countries closer and closer. This program is expected to create opportunities for a more interesting and motivating environment to learn and use English to fulfill real purposes and to develop much wider knowledge in students' future careers. It also aims to develop valuable academic skills such as note taking, summarizing, and extracting key information from texts and to reinforce higher-level thinking skills as students gather information from different sources, evaluate and synthesize. The ultimate achievement is, of course, to equip our students with proficient skills in English, which will hopefully help them find a better job, and use English in their future working places efficiently.

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