Developing EAP Curriculum at University Setting: the Case of Birzeit

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Abstract: *A shift from teaching English for general purposes to teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has entailed changes in English teaching practices at Birzeit University. To succeed in the shift, an attempt was made to design EAP materials that could accommodate the special needs of the students. However, while designing new materials can be somewhat heartwarming both professionally and individually, it can also be an intricate process, posing a number of challenges. This study aims at exploring Birzeit University attempt to develop its English Communications Program focusing on the major steps and factors influencing this process and the implications toward evaluating its effectiveness.*
Keywords: teaching EAP, curriculum syllabus **re**design, needs analysis

1. Introduction

EAP is associated with the practices that are related to training students, usually in a university setting, to undertake study in English. It is a branch of English Language Teaching, and is one of the most acknowledged forms of ESP. An EAP program usually capitalizes on the necessary skills that the learners need to do well in an English-speaking academic context. EAP courses are usually pre-sessional courses that are part of specialized subject areas, which may call for specific linguistic requirements of a specific area of study. EAP courses or programs may be divided into pre- university courses or courses taught along with other university/specialization courses.

At Birzeit University (BZU), the EAP program is integrated within the university requirements and forms part and parcel of the compulsory courses all students must take. Students are enrolled in a four level course system according to their score in a placement exam. As in other language teaching models, EAP instruction at BZU teaches vocabulary, little grammar and the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). The main aim of EAP at BZU is to help learners study or research in English, which covers a wide range of academic communicative objectives.

EAP is a practical branch of English Language Teaching in which the role of the teacher is to find out what the students' needs are, what learners have to do in their academic courses, and how to help them do this better in the time available (Gillett and Wray 2006). This is a real challenge for the teacher who has to design the course based on specific objectives and to use the appropriate methodology to meet these objectives successfully and effectively.

This article will shed light on the attempt of a tertiary institution (BZU) to redesign the syllabi of its English teaching program in an endeavor to improve students' English language skill in order to cope with the linguistic requirements necessary for university success and, at the same time, to equip them with the oral and written literacy that will help them achieve real-world goals. In the following sections, the main milestones of this process are highlighted and reviewed hoping to share the main aspects and findings of this effort with readers and interested colleagues. The author of the article will report the process as happened focusing on the main stages that need discussion more than others, in particular the needs analysis.

2. Curriculum development, syllabus design

Syllabus and curriculum are two manifestations of teaching and learning activities. Syllabus can be defined as a roadmap for teachers and learners to help them attain the intended learning outcomes. Hutchinson and Waters (1987:80) define syllabus as: "At its simplest level a syllabus can be described as a statement of what is to be learnt. It reflects language and linguistic performance''. Such a definition of syllabus focuses on the outcomes rather than the process, and it cannot predict what will or will not be learnt. On the other hand, curriculum is a broader term once compared with syllabus. Curriculum comprises all activities and measures taken to facilitate learning and instruction.

In language learning and instruction, syllabus design and curriculum development are recognized. Syllabus is a description of the content and topics and states what will be taught and evaluated, whereas syllabus design is related to the process of developing a syllabus (Richards 2001:2). The process of curriculum development is more comprehensive. It includes all the procedures required to decide on the needs of learners, to develop goals or objectives for a teaching program, to meet those needs through a suitable syllabus, to select appropriate methodology, and to assess the outcomes that results from these processes (Richards 2001:2). In this paper the term curriculum as applied to BZU refers to both curriculum and syllabus.

Many trends in syllabus design in foreign language instruction have been followed since its emergence in the 1960s. Perhaps, the most noticeable views are those summarized by Stern (1984). The first trend, advocated by Candlin and Breen, and referred to as the 'Lancaster School', defended a perspective of a free rather than a fixed notion of syllabus which can be planned, pre-ordained, and imposed on both teachers and students.

The second trend, led by Widdowson and Brumfit, called the 'London School', considers an alternative and more realistic approach that a syllabus is essential; economical, and useful. Widdowson proposes that a syllabus should be structural with a communicative methodology. Brumfit believes that the curriculum is a general statement designed for all types of practical purposes; to him a syllabus must be based on concepts of language, language learning, and language use (Stern 1984:8).

The third school is the 'Toronto School', which was represented by Allen, did not emphasize the learner's role in syllabus development. While accepting the need for a syllabus, the main issue for him is developing a theoretically sound and practically useful curriculum.

A bridge between the London school and the Toronto school is Yalden's formulation. Yalden identifies the theoretical foundations of the syllabus content. Like Brumfit, Yalden suggests that the learner may contribute to the curriculum, but she is not concerned with the learner's role in syllabus development. The syllabus, as she believes, is mainly a teacher's account about objectives and content. According to Yalden, to construct a syllabus based on language use, we need to do needs analysis, the results of which determine the content of the syllabus ((Stern 1984:9).

To design a syllabus is to determine what to teach and in what order. Therefore, selecting what type of syllabus to use is a crucial decision in the process of language teaching which should be made with utmost care and consciousness of all the factors affecting the teaching/learning process. There has been much controversy over the different types of syllabi, their content and teaching methodology. Many syllabi have been suggested (Breen 1987; Hammer 2001; Hyland 2004; Krahnke 1987; Wilkins 1985). Six distinct types of foreign language syllabus design stand out:

1. Structural syllabus: language teaching content is basically forms and structures, usually of grammatical components such as verbs, nouns, tenses, etc.
2. Notional/functional syllabus: language teaching content is the functions of language usage, for example informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting, and promising.
3. Situational syllabus: language teaching content is situations in which language takes place or used, for example visiting the doctor, asking for directions, shopping, and the like.
4. Skill-based syllabus: the language teaching content focuses on certain abilities that help in using the language.
5. Content–based syllabus: instruction primarily capitalizes on subject content or information using the language that the students are exposed to in their specialization. The subject matter is important and language learning occurs in conjunction with content learning. An example of content-based language teaching syllabus is a business class using the language the students need to learn.
6. Task-based syllabus: teaching content is a sequence of tasks tailored according to students' needs. This approach focuses on students' ability to carry out a language activity or a task.

Whatever syllabus is to be followed, it is of dire importance that all participants in the teaching/ learning process understand the need to work concertedly to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3. The situation

The dominant EAP situation in the Arab countries including Palestine is one where certain subjects are taught in English. In this situation English is used as a medium of instruction for specific subjects as medicine, engineering, science, IT, Pharmacy, business administration and others. In almost all educational systems, there is no official English medium instruction at schools except private ones. Once students join university, they find that they have to use English in their study.

At BZU, the EAP situation is complex. On the one hand, the local conditions are not by any means conducive to an easy and effective reform if needed; on the other, coordination is almost absent. While all acknowledge the dire need for curriculum development, little concerted action is being done in this regard. BZU keeps attempting to develop the English curriculum; however, there are no signs of satisfaction (on more than one level) due to absence of a sound evaluation of these attempts. Curriculum development at BZU followed three main tracks: improving the teaching methods, searching for suitable teaching materials, and reformulating the intended learning outcomes. In such an endeavor, the Department of Languages and Translation which is responsible for teaching the EAP curriculum at BZU, tried to go beyond this tradition by adapting the teaching to a type of learning based on needs analysis that identifies students' target English situation needs. The results are used as a basis of EAP/ ESP instruction in an attempt to provide students with the specific language they need to succeed in their courses and career. Training the learner how to learn has received attention at BZU, but not a pivotal one that can relate to the critical needs analysis that must be sought in order to bring about the desired success.

BZU has a basic in-sessional program of three levels where students are placed according to their score in an English placement exam. Top-down, the courses are ENGC231, ENGC141, and ENGC101. In addition, BZU has ESP courses designed for specific specializations (Law, Public Administration, pharmacy, Journalism); and recently BZU has introduced two advanced EAP courses in writing and oral communication.

3.1. The students

The students at BZU who enroll in the English courses (above) are basically freshmen who have recently join the university and are enrolled in the university compulsory courses including the English language courses. These are students who have passed the General Secondary Certificate Exam and are eligible according to their average in the exam to join the university regardless of their faculty and/ or specialization. Most of these students have received formal English Language teaching in government public schools. Based on their performance in the English Placement Test at BZU, their English is, by and large, under average. Only around 25% are above average. The cut-off scores for the courses in this test are as follows:

Table 1. Cut-off scores in the test

Range	level
70-100	ENGC 231
45-69	ENGC 141
0-44	ENGC 101

These students will participate in the questionnaires of the needs analysis (cf. 6.2).

3.2. The teachers

EFL teachers and subject Teachers will respond to the questionnaire prepared for each category. The subject teachers will be using academic English as a means of instruction in their subjects. The EFL teachers will be teaching English for Academic Purposes in order to help students cope with the subject delivered to them in English and prepare them for future learning or work that require English. The EFL teachers will also participate in the process of syllabus re-design throughout all its stages. An EFL expert will coach and participate in the process.

4. Constructing an EAP program at BZU

When dealing with educational matters, one aspires for the best and there is always a desire to achieve more. BZU embarked on a life-time process to improve English teaching at the University. Many attempts have been made in this regard to improve, reshape, and give quality to the English program. The last of these was launching the *Quality English Teaching/Learning Project* the purpose of which was to arrive at a sound EAP program and to ensure that English instruction is effective and achieving its goals.

The goals and rationale behind these attempts were generally to improve and upgrade English Language Teaching at BZU. The main issues that were continuously raised focused on four axes:

a) Redesigning the syllabus in view of the state of art in English Language Teaching.
b) Selecting, reproducing, and collating new teaching materials.
c) Using appropriate methodology for teaching materials.
d) Finding resources that may facilitate teaching/learning.

In this context, efforts usually focused on *curricula development, syllabus redesign, and the production of course descriptions and teaching materials*. The distinction between external goals determined in part by needs analysis and internal teaching goals was a crucial one; as the distinction allows for both a structured common purpose in curriculum planning in addition to a scope for teachers' individual methodological preferences and expertise in syllabus redesign. To perform a rather structured and methodical process, an adaptation of Bell (1981:36) was followed (Figure 1). This report will shed some light on certain aspects of the model, specifically those before the pilot phase, as the other

phases are beyond the current paper, though very important and need independent studies.
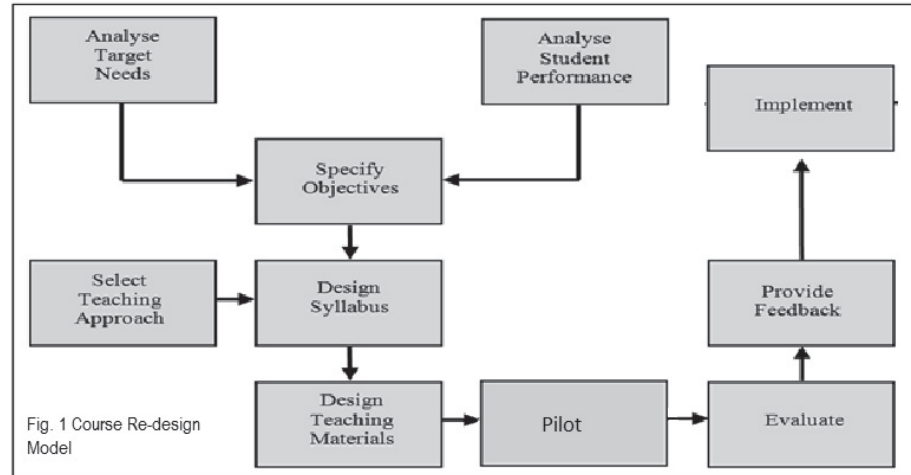

Figure 1: Course re-design model

5. EAP and needs analysis

Needs analysis has been the main method for deciding the content of an ESP/EAP curriculum; it gives an account of the academic skills and their types that students may encounter (Dudley-Evans and Johns 1991; Robinson 1991). Needs analysis emphasizes students' academic capability based on an institutional perception and expects student compliance with course requirements (Benesch 1996). It describes students' expected performances rather than what they really are.

Since its emergence in 1920s (Tickoo 1988), when the concept was first introduced, 'needs analysis' aimed at covering concepts of 'need' that could add to the 'yield value' of learning. There have been many traditional descriptive approaches to needs analysis in foreign-language teaching, e.g. Target-Situation Analysis (Munby 1978), present-situation analysis (PSA), (Richterich and Chancerel 1977/80), 'means analysis' or 'the ecological approach' (Holliday and Cook 1982), Learning-Centered Approaches, (Hutchinson and Waters 1987). The principal focal point of early needs analysis was English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), but later changed to EAP and ESP. The scope of needs analysis was syllabus design based on target-situation needs, but later teaching methods and learning strategies, and materials selection were added.

A new trend in needs analysis and EAP emerged. This trend advocates a more critical approach to consider social, political, institutional, and individual rights (Benesch 1993/1996; Santos 1992). EAP research should not neglect the social, political and economic factors in the classroom and should acknowledge that teachers, students, and curricula are part of a complex network of social, political and economic influences (Edelsky and Hudelson, 1991). Needs analysis should not disregard the ideological basis and surely the unequal social statuses of

the different parties involved and the influence of such variations on curriculum development. All those who are involved in the learning process should be considered including employers, academic institutions, instructors, and the learners.

Critical needs analysis, therefore, is to take place on university level, college level, major level (other subjects) and department level (English). It embraces the target situation as an area of possible reform where all needs are regarded whether hierarchical or conflicting including national, university, departmental, and classroom. How much change can be brought about in the target situation depends on factors affected by local conditions, teacher and student preparedness, and the political climate in the academic institution (Pennycook 1997).

EAP courses are usually founded on an analysis of needs, the goal of which is to define what the learners should do through English at university and after graduation. This would require considering the opinions of all the stakeholders. The point of departure is, therefore, to analyze the learners' target needs. At BZU this meant to research the needs as perceived by the different stakeholders involved, particularly the students, the subject teachers, the EFL teachers, the higher level of administration, i.e. heads of departments, deans and Vice president for academic affairs, and a sample of the prospective employers.

6. Methodology

The starting point to do the needs analysis sought (following a semi-critical approach) at BZU was to construct questionnaires, and conduct interviews, in order to obtain data relevant to the intended goals which focused on language use and relevant practices that students will need in their academic courses and future work. *The term "needs" hereinafter is generally and broadly used to comprise students' wants, subject teachers' necessities, and EFL teachers' perceptions*. Issues of definition and goals inside "Needs Analysis" were broached via a discussion of the hierarchy implied by the terms:

- English for General Purposes,
- English for Academic/ Study Purposes,
- English for Professional Purposes, and
- English for Special Subjects such as Nursing, Computer Science, etc.

The focus of the EAP courses at BZU is on *English for Academic, Study purposes*, with different degrees of subject specificity depending on the degree to which the addressees of the proposed English courses are already subject specialists (some courses in General English are obligatory at Birzeit for all students *before* they register for specific subject courses), and the degree to which subject-specific courses can be set up with the teaching resources available. Furthermore, elements of General English courses are also likely to be appropriate course contents, depending inter alia on the level of English already held by the course addressees.

An important major factor in "needs analysis" is that the traditional four skills are *not* to be used as an organizing principle for constructing questionnaires and/or interviews. It is commonly recognized that the traditional skills division

has little or no relevance to our attempts to understand language learning (Brumfit 2001: 40-43). The traditional skills are most commonly used together, not separately. For example, note-taking involves writing, but is clearly based on oral or written input. Further, the notes will be read, expanded, or incorporated into oral presentations, etc. Faced, therefore, with a question of the kind: *Which of the four skills is most important to you in your studies?,* students (and teachers) are unlikely to have any relevant insight. Using the four traditional skills as an orientation might predispose the research team into thinking in precisely the same categories for curriculum purposes (i.e. courses in reading, writing, etc. will be offered as outcomes of the research). Indeed, this may eventually be one outcome, but it should not be built into the elicitation design.

The process of syllabus redesign started by evaluating the current English courses designed to facilitate subject learning in English. A structural infelicity was discovered, directly relevant to curriculum planning. Courses are hierarchically ordered, in such a way that they are not all taken by all students. So some, students take all the courses, while other students are exempted from the lower level courses on the basis of their marks in the placement test. This means that in any course above the lowest level (D- 101), some students will have covered materials in preceding courses (C- 102, B- 141, A- 231) while others will not. This entails certain consequences for developing a coherent curriculum. One structurally important consequence is that, in general, the sequenced English courses will for the most part differ from one another not so much in curriculum goals but rather in the level of complexity/ difficulty of the materials used. The issue of syllabus redesign links with the central issues of language pedagogy, e.g. the role of the teacher, the relationship between a focus on language and a focus on communication, and sequencing criteria.

Selecting the teaching materials, on the other hand, was discussed under the broad question: Are these materials suitable for sections of the targeted students at Birzeit? If they are, for whom, to what end, and why? If not, why not?

6.1 Noticing the gap
The above concerns presented insights that can help in the redesign process. To gain a maximum benefit from the results of the data analysis, and to convert the bare figures into tangible workable redesign of the syllabi and select teaching materials that are geared at achieving the goals intended by the needs analysis, it was very important to consider a "Noticing" approach to help determine what and how to teach. In the second language acquisition, noticing the gap is considered to be a crucial factor. Edmondson (2009) argues that noticing is viewed as an outcome of attentive or deliberate action. Schmidt and Frota (1986) believe that a gap is to be perceived between the learners' current linguistic knowledge as realised in their output and that which they may encounter in the target language input, and that learners must attend to linguistic structures of the input available to them so that such input becomes an 'intake'. In the classroom, noticing is usually practiced through activities and processes comprising input improvement

(Sharwood 1993), and attending to new linguistic forms is best achieved through tasks that entail training language learners in effective processing (Skehan 1998).

6.2. The questionnaires

Three questionnaires were given out to 2012 students, 85 subject teachers, and 19 EFL teachers. These questionnaires included:

a) An introduction: a statement of purpose, assurance of anonymity etc.
b) Language Needs: a four-point Likert scale to obtain data on the perceived importance of different tasks, functions or uses of English as a study tool.
c) 18 questions on the uses and difficulties
d) 4 questions to subject teachers and 8 questions to students and EFL teachers alike on assessment of status quo.
e) Subject data: asking for personal information.
f) Signing off: expression of thanks, etc.

The following three principles were relevant when designing the questionnaires:

- The different data sets must be comparable. Triangulation is the goal. The questions given to the students should strictly match those given to the teachers, though the wording will of course change.
- The different data sets must be directly relevant for the proposed analyses. If, therefore, specific questions cover variables that are outside the domain *of the investigation they serve no purpose.*
- The different data sets must target variables (issues, opinions and practices) which are directly or indirectly of pedagogic and/or methodological relevance.

It is conceded that this last criterion can be flexibly interpreted, as the results of data analysis and the development of pedagogic principles and/or curriculum design profiles are unlikely to be directly linked.

Basically the questionnaires (for full questionnaires, visit link 1in Appendix) included sections on uses, difficulties and status quo as follows:

A. **Uses**

Students: How important do you think the following uses of English are to you and your studying?

Subject and EFL Teachers: How important do you think the following uses of English are to your students?

(1= very important, 2= important, 3= not very important, 4= not important)

1. Taking notes while listening to a lecture in class.
2. Asking questions in class.
3. Answering teacher questions in class.
4. Preparing an oral presentation in English for class.
5. Delivering an oral presentation in English in class.
6. Participation in small group discussion.
7. Understanding questions in written examinations and tests.
8. Answering written examination and test questions.

9. Taking notes in English while reading an English text.
10. Understanding and using graphic materials in English.
11. Describing laboratory work and writing up experiments.
12. Producing materials in English for teacher assessment.
13. Writing a term or research paper.
14. Reading and understanding set text-books.
15. Reading and understanding additional materials (e.g. journals, etc).
16. Efficiently using an English dictionary.
17. Improving English through deliberate practice and self-study.
18. Using the internet to access material in English.

B. Language difficulties
In this section exactly the same list of functions or tasks will be presented.
The questions for students and Teachers were:
Students: How difficult do you find the following uses of English?
Teachers: How difficult do you think your students find the following uses of English.
(1= very difficult, 2= difficult, 3= they can do it with some kind of difficulty, 4= not difficult)
Questions: 1-18 above.

C. Assessment of status quo
In this section the usefulness and relevance of the current teaching program will be assessed. There are two aspects - whether the level of instruction was appropriate, following course assignment, and whether and to what degree the instruction received was perceived as relevant und useful.

Again the questions given to the students should strictly match those given to the teachers, though the wording will of course change (Below).
Assessment of status quo (students): How much do you agree with the following?
*(*1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= do not agree, 4= strongly do not agree*)*

1. The content of my English courses was in general interesting.
2. The English courses are the least important courses I take.
3. I only visited the English courses because I had to. If they were optional, I would not go.
4. It would be of more benefit to me that content of the English courses deal with topics of my specialization.
5. On the whole I have benefited from the English classes I have attended.
6. My level in the placement exam matches my actual level in English and the level of the course I was placed in.
7. I would very much like to see the materials of the English courses based on my specialization.
8. The English courses I have taken are not enough; I need to take more English.

Assessment of status quo (Subject Teachers)
1. It would be of more benefit to my students that content of the English courses deal with topics of the specialization I teach.
2. The English courses my students have taken are not enough; they need to take more English.
3. My students' skills are not enough and they limit my teaching goals and strategies.
4. I might teach differently if my students had better skills in English.

It is important to note that after the 3 main sections of the questionnaires, i.e. after (A), (B) and (C) above - Importance, Difficulty, and Assessment - a semi-open question was added, to allow the subject filling out the questionnaire to mention anything additional that he or she finds relevant, e.g.

- "If you wish to, please mention in the following space any other difficulties with English which you find relevant to your university studies."
- "If you wish to, please suggest any ways in which you think the English courses you attended could be made better."

6.3. Analysis and discussion

Naturally, the empirical results of the Needs Analysis (phase) will not and cannot themselves determine what or how to teach. Therefore, some general consensus on the type of curriculum to be aimed for is necessary. It was pointed out once more that individual teachers will and should implement the negotiated curriculum goals via varied didactic strategies and material. The data gathered in the empirical phase was carefully scrutinised and analysed. Specifically, a detailed statistical analysis of the questionnaire data was attempted (for full statistics, please visit link 2 in appendix). Inter-group and intra-group correlations were considered, particularly to answer questions about specific results of specific groups, e.g. students in different stages of their studies may have divergent views, different weightings in terms of importance and/or difficulty might obtain for different groups of subject teachers, or student groups may reveal different learning sets in their answers.

The collection and analysis of sample instructional materials from subject teachers was a useful spur to the development of relevant teaching materials. Possibly, this has helped in determining specific intended learning outcomes; for example, sample study texts used to collect patterns of specific uses of English-complex nominal phrases, use of the passive, and so on.

In order to arrive at resilient syllabus and materials that are hoped to improve the already existing ones, it was necessary to classify the results of the questionnaires in a practical interpretable manner and according to the focus of each questionnaire as follows:

A. **Classification according to importance**

Tasks and their total average values (student, subject teachers, EFL teachers), percentages are hierarchically listed were # 1 is the highest and 18 is the lowest (table 2).

Table 2. Classification of tasks according to importance

rank	percentage	question #	question
1	95.6%	7	understanding questions in written examinations and tests
2	95.6%	14	reading and understanding textbooks
3	95.3%	17	improving English through deliberate practice and self-study
4	94%	8	answering written examination and test questions
5	92%	1	taking notes while listening to a lecture in class
6	90.3%	13	writing a term or research paper
7	89.6%	16	efficiently using an English dictionary
8	89.6%	15	reading and understanding additional materials (journals, etc.)
9	88.3%	9	taking notes in English while reading an English text
10	87.3%	12	producing materials in English for teacher assessment
11	85%	10	understanding and using graphic materials in English
12	84.6%	11	describing laboratory work and writing up experiments
13	84.6%	6	participating in a small group discussion
14	83.6%	2	asking questions in class
15	83.3%	18	using the internet to access material in English
16	82.6%	3	answering teacher's questions
17	81%	4	preparing an oral presentation in English
18	78.3%	5	delivering an oral presentation in English

B. Classification according to cluster skill foci (task approach)
1. Curricular
a. Reading Focus: Rank 1
    (i)   Reading and understanding set text-books.
    (ii) Understanding the questions in written examinations and tests.
    (iii) Reading and understanding additional materials (journals, etc.)
Q: 7+14+15 (95.6+95.6+89.6=93.6)

b. Writing Focus: Rank 4
    (i)   Producing materials in English for teacher assessment.
    (ii) Describing laboratory work and writing up experiments.
Q: 12+11 (87.3+84.6=86)

c. Reading/Writing/Listening Focus: Rank 2
   (i)   Taking notes while listening to a lecture in class.
   (ii) Writing a term or research paper.
   (iii) Understanding and using graphic materials in English.
Q: 1+13+10 (92+90.3+85=89.1)

d. Speaking Focus: Rank 5
   (i)   Asking questions in class.
   (ii) Answering teacher questions in class.
   (iii) Delivering an oral presentation in English in class.
   (iv) Participating in a small group discussion.
Q: 2+6+3+5 (84.6+83.6+82.6+78.3=82.3)

e. Study skills focus: Rank 3
   (i)   Efficiently using an English dictionary.
   (ii) Taking notes in English while reading an English text.
   (iii) Answering written examination and test questions.
   (iv) Preparing an oral presentation in English for class.
Q: 8+16+9+4 (94+89.6+88.3+81=88.2)
   2. Extracurricular
   a. Being able to improve my own English through deliberate practice and self-study.
   b. Using the internet to access material in English.
   Q: 17+18 (95.3+83.3=89.3)

6.4 Conclusions
   1. It is clear from the above that the reading focus tasks are to be given priority in both importance and size;
   2. writing tasks based on reading and listening activities are second in importance and size;
   3. study skill tasks are third;
   4. content oriented writing tasks are fourth; and
   5. speaking tasks are last in importance and size (though indirectly included in other tasks).
Note: other classifications can be arrived at including more foci or sub-tasks. This should be determined with regard to the different courses and their nature (EAP, ESP, etc.)
   Suggested percentage of syllabus: the following percentages were suggested for the syllabus based on the results:
   1. Reading 35%
   2. Reading/writing/listening foci: 24%
   3. Study skills: 16%
   4. Writing 15%

5. Speaking: 10%

Therefore, according to the four traditional skills, Reading accounted for 43%, writing for 23%, study skills for 16%, Speaking for 10%, and listening for 8%. However, such demarcation of percentages will be quite impractical and incongruent with the skill integrated syllabi, but still significant to size of materials for each, calculated instructional time allocated for each, and percentage of evaluation.

7. Task-based approaches to second language teaching and syllabus

Among the types of syllabus design (c.f. 2 above), task-based approaches to second language teaching have drawn much interest among language teaching experts and researchers (Prabhu 1987; Robinson 1995, 2001; Skehan 2003; Ellis 2003). One of the most important forms of task-based approaches is task-based language teaching (Long and Crookes 1992). While differing from other forms in certain ways, it does not favor linguistic elements like structures, and functions, and the unit of analysis adopted in the task. In task-based language teaching a distinction is made between *target tasks* (tasks used in everyday life), and *pedagogic tasks*, derived from the target task prepared to form the task-based syllabus. Teachers and students work on the later in the classroom (Long 1989:89). Grading and sequencing of pedagogic tasks in terms of complexity is a challenge for the task-based syllabus designers.

At BZU where teachers have a free hand to develop their syllabi, teachers of the English communication courses were involved in the design process, however with the help of an expert and, of course, after they have received the necessary skills training needed to help them design their own syllabi.

After much negotiation and discussion of what type of task-based approach to be followed, given all the information gathered for this purpose (needs analysis, interviews), the team of teachers involved in the redesign process agreed on one, namely the use of tasks which require some cognitive engagement: tasks that link with real-life activities, require outcomes, but are at the same time designed precisely to enhance language awareness in the broadest sense. Some solid findings from task-based research were presented, specifically:

- Pair or small group work (as opposed to individual task-work, or class-teacher interaction) has been shown to have considerable acquisitional potential.
- Studies show (Nunan 2004) that even a short planning time for a production task can affect the fluency, accuracy or complexity of the result positively, provided the planning is focused on production or performance, and not on content.
- Doing the same task again after a suitable but short time-gap can lead to enhanced performance on different measures. It is not a question here of simply answering the same questions, after being told the correct answers, but of working again on a complex task such as giving a talk, when only general feedback occurred after the first run-through.

By way of illustration, several examples of "tasks" in the relevant sense were presented, e.g. dictogloss, discourse completion tasks, reconstruction of one side of a telephone conversation, or enacting of prepared scenarios which lack an information-gap or misunderstanding. Such tasks and the rationale behind them evoked much interest, and also some unease. Finally, it was suggested that a *task-supported* methodology, rather than a *task-based* one, might be appropriate when translating a curriculum based on the questionnaire data into a teaching program (see model syllabi in links 3,4,5 in appendix)

8. Recommendations
Reproducing and implementing the EAP at BZU witnessed many ups and downs; however, in order that this work yields practical outcomes, the curricula and teaching materials should always be directly relevant to the perceived needs and difficulties of the addressees. In addition, the establishment of certain curricula for specific courses must not preclude choice of teaching material and teaching strategy on the part of the individual teacher. It should also be very useful to address the central didactic problem of how to combine relevant and meaningful content materials via a task-supported methodology. Therefore, the overall structure and coherence of the English courses offered should be carefully reviewed. The nature, content and goals of examinations conducted in the English language courses should be given careful consideration. Finally, it is strongly recommended that an on-going evaluation of the English Communications Program be carried out by the Department of Languages and Translation.

9. Conclusion
Drawing on the above, and on the many workshops, meetings and discussions, the endeavour to improve the curriculum, redesign the syllabus and find input materials ended in proposing a "simplistic" course curriculum, specifying which behaviours in English should be targeted in different courses to different levels of competence and complexity. These behaviours capitalised on working with information presented in texts, graphs and figures, composing such data on the basis of written or spoken input, taking notes from oral and/ or written input under different situational and contextual constraints, and developing appropriate routines and strategies for conducting content-based classroom interaction in English.

From these grounds, more illustrative concrete curricula for all the English Communications courses were put forward on which syllabi, materials and pedagogic strategies were based (examples in links 3,4 and5 in appendix) which practically illustrates the experience of BZU to develop its EAP program. However, whether BZU efforts were a success or not is left to the real implementation of the syllabi and their evaluation afterwards.

The situation at BZU, now, in terms of an improved EAP is hopeful, but not final. There remain salient issues yet to be resolved: most importantly, those concerning which materials and what methodology can suit the finalised syllabi; the endeavour goes on.

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Appendix

For more details on the statistics and model syllabi, Please follow the links below:

1. http://www.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/qetlp/Draft-Questionnaire.docx
2. http://www.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/qetlp/Questionnaires-Results-Classification.docx
3. http://www.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/qetlp/101-102-model.doc
4. http://www.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/qetlp/ENGC-141-Model.doc
5. http://www.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/qetlp/ENGC-231-model.doc
6. http://www.birzeit.edu/sites/default/files/qetlp/Checklist-for-interview-of-faculty-and-dean.doc