



**Title of Report:** Intensive English program for students in Lebanon

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## **1. Identify and describe the training program.**

The Intensive English Program (IEP) is an intensive university-based program where the medium of instruction is English in all courses taught except for language courses. Students are placed in this program if, according to university enrollment rules, they get accepted but fail in the English placement test. According to their grades on the TOEFL test (between 400 and 599 on the paper-and-pencil TOEFL), they are placed in one of the IEP levels. Above this score range, they become regular students, but if their scores fall below it they are rejected.

In this program, there are between 175 and 200 students. In the first four IEP levels, students receive 126 instructional hours in seven weeks. In the highest two levels of the program, they receive 105 hours of instruction. Those students are taught all the language skills (writing, reading, speaking, and listening) in addition to grammar and vocabulary. Eight teachers with MA degrees in TEFL or related fields teach those students. Those teachers are fluent English speakers.

English is the language students need for their future careers. Thus, once they become regular students they are required to take one of two more advanced language courses: Business Writing or Communication Skills, depending on what their major may be.

## **2. Describe the target audience for the training program.**

Since Hariri Canadian University is a private university, the enrolled students come mainly from the middle and lower-middle classes, and they reflect diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Some students were educated in English but their proficiency level is poor. Others were educated in French and need more instruction in English.

The university is twenty-minute drive from the nearest area and seventy minutes from the other areas. Thus some students must commute. Students who come from farther distances live in the university dorms or rent lodgings nearby.

The English Department is a service department because there are only two faculties at the university: the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Business. The degrees offered are the BS and the MBS, and the industries involved are all in the engineering and business domains.

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### **3. Describe the needs assessment procedures utilized to develop the program.**

The needs analysis is based on an assessment of the students' results every two semesters. In addition, action research is done in the department to diagnose strengths and weakness of the program and to resolve problems.

In the first instance, students' scores, success rates, and personal narratives are dealt with as the sources of information about how successful teachers are at addressing their students' needs. Based on that, teachers may be rotated in classes or assigned different skills to teach.

In the second instance, part and parcel of the action research projects conducted here is meeting regularly with instructors in the different departments and getting their feedback on the students' linguistic performance. Another important factor is that 15% to 20% of students' examinations grades are based on their language.

### **4. Explain the English language training program's over-arching goals and specific objectives.**

There are four main goals in the program:

1. to prepare students for academic success in the university;
2. to provide opportunities for students to develop a better understanding of the world's cultural heritage;
3. to ensure that all students acquire skills that allow them to continue to learn throughout their lifetimes; and
4. to encourage students to engage in independent learning.

There are also several more specific objectives:

1. to improve students' reading, writing, grammar, listening and note-taking skills;
2. to strengthen each student's communication skills and provide chances for efficient use of language;
3. to develop students' skills in problem solving, analysis, synthesis and evaluation; and
4. to strengthen every student's research skills so s/he can understand and identify what a research question is, and address research problems independently and creatively.

To attain those goals and objectives, students are involved in individual and group projects, as well as presentations of those projects. The program also includes field trips and activities that lend themselves to students' active use of language skills.

### **5. Describe the teaching methods and training procedures used in the program.**



Across the six levels of the IEP, the teachers are student-centered. That is, they act as facilitators of the learning process. In that capacity, they provide many chances for students to participate in classroom discussions and activities. They also structure pair and group work to increase collaboration and cooperation among the students. The teachers involve students in topics or themes related to real-life situations to show how the subjects can be applied in real life. They diagnose individual learning needs of students and address those needs.

Teachers are provided with an in-service training period to get to know the program and how to use technology in their classes. Students are required to prepare group projects and present them twice per half semester. Students' projects are subject-specific; in each subject area, they are required to prepare at least two projects and present them. The more creative those projects are and the more technology they use in their presentations (LCDs, Power Points, Projector), the higher the grade is.

## **6. Describe the teaching materials used in the program.**

For each class level, the teaching material is basically a textbook series adopted for the IEP program. The series consist of a set of four books, each of which focuses on one language skill. There is a grammar textbook for supplementary materials. There are also numerous vocabulary handouts. Information is provided about the required TOEFL lessons too.

There are supplementary self-paced study materials for reading skills development. Students are assigned a number of "Reading for Understanding" lessons to study on the internet, after which they take a weekly quiz.

In addition to the classroom lesson hours, two learning center hours are scheduled during which teachers work with individual students or small groups of students who have weaknesses, so those students get reinforcement practice exercises. Not only are the reading materials and exercises intended to upgrade students' skill proficiency levels; they also expose students to authentic materials that relate to all their fields of study.

## **7. Explain the content of the English language training program.**

### **A. What written and spoken genres are covered in the training program?**

The written and spoken genres that are covered in the training program include emails, progress reports, and individual professional department deliberation presentations. When students write their progress reports, they report the level of improvement in their study skills, skill usage, and English use in face-to-face communication situations.

### **B. What communicative functions are covered in the training program?**



Students are trained to communicate successfully with classmates, instructors, and administration personnel. Learners are taught how to take turns, ask for help, express their opinions politely, and stand up for their rights. On the other hand, they are taught how to do small scale searches, seek help from librarians or administrators, discuss the data they collect with classmates and instructors, and argue for or against a specific topic. Preparation culminates in simulation activities. Different career scenarios are presented to students who in turn have to talk about a problem and suggest a good solution.

### **C. What speech events are covered in the training program?**

It is anticipated that during their university studies, the English learners will need to use their English skills in classroom discussions, in presentations, during conferencing sessions with their teachers, and with employees on campus.

More specifically, students are engaged in three activities that prepare them for their future careers. The first is participating in public speaking contests. The second is meeting with company representatives during the career fair and reporting the interview merits and demerits to the whole class. The third is experiencing a mock job interview in the Intercultural Communication courses. The three activities are aimed at upgrading students' confidence levels as well as their language proficiency. In all cases, whenever an activity is given or a follow up session takes place in class, students are asked to do peer assessments.

### **8. Explain the delivery mechanisms employed by the program.**

The main delivery mode consists of regularly scheduled face-to-face classes. There are additional small group discussions for project selection and prior to presentation. Individual or small group tutorials with students are scheduled to address students' weaknesses.

There are also self-access centers for reinforcement exercises. In the two self-access centers, materials are classified by skill, class level, and topic. Since there is no one designated as the self-access teacher, the classroom teacher takes on four roles. The first is telling the student about his/her specific problem and providing the needed guidance as to how s/he can make the best use of the materials available. The second is scheduling formative assessments per individual student. The third is encouraging the student to do as many readings as possible and go to the center more often, taking into consideration the fact that the student would do minimal work to pass the course. The fourth is helping the student locate new materials of interest and assuring that the teacher is there whenever the student needs help.

### **9. Explanation of the assessment procedures used in the program.**

Several regular assessment procedures are used in this program. First, students are given a diagnostic test at the beginning of the semester. They also take four complete tests during the semester and four quizzes, one on each Reading for Understanding activity, as well



as on vocabulary. There is a final test on the material covered in the textbooks, and also a final TOEFL test.

As mentioned earlier, students receive instruction in all the four skills and two subskills. An average of one formative assessment per skills is done every week. Consequently, if the teacher decides that more instruction is to be provided, s/he may decide to eliminate one or more formative assessments or reduce their value in the assessment process (e.g., to make it worth 5% instead of 10%, for example). This decision may also be related to the difficulty level of the test content.

#### **10. Explain the program evaluation mechanisms used.**

An end-of-semester course assessment questionnaire is posted on the website for students to assess the course content, the instructors, their teaching methodology and the textbooks. The departmental pass/fail rates per class are also used in the program evaluation process. The faculty members hold department meetings to discuss results, evaluate textbooks, and propose improvements.

Three different sources of feedback contribute to shaping the English teachers' proposed improvements. First there is the different faculty members' feedback on students' linguistic proficiency levels, an indication of the quality of teaching. Second, there are the English teachers' evaluations of students' performance. And third, the students evaluate their instructors' performance. The students also assess their own improvement levels and the weaknesses that should be addressed, and decide on who can help them overcome barriers to their future career chances. This triangulation process helps in visualizing how to improve the teaching/learning situation.

There is also department discussion of the action research results. The ideas for action research are generated on the basis of the department problems or needs. For example, one of the research projects was about doing the teacher performance assessment through students' narratives. These narratives provided useful information in determining whether or not students were biased against the teacher.

#### **11. Discuss the challenges involved in offering this English training program.**

Since some students are basically French educated, they may need to take all six levels of the IEP. Those students who fail more than twice are rejected, thus the program loses them.

When students fail twice in the lower levels, the classes they need to repeat may not be available in the second semester. Though this rarely happens, they will have to either wait for a whole semester or else they leave the program to transfer to another institution.

Teachers are, by nature, more accomplished at teaching some skills than others. In this case, the program has to study the feasibility of assigning teachers to the skills they are very



good at teaching. For example, not all teachers have experience teaching discipline-specific courses. As a result, a teacher may like to teach higher IEP levels, and thus would show less interest in teaching lower levels, which students can sense even if it is not stated explicitly. A teacher who teaches the Business Communication (regular) course may also feel s/he is better than others at preparing students for their careers; consequently, this teacher may want to select the IEP class level s/he wants to teach though s/he may not teach program-specific terms at all. This situation would require input from the chair to decide who is best at teaching a specific skill and whether or not s/he has the required knowledge for that specific level.

The program has to consider the needs of some students who work. The whole class schedule has to be studied carefully so that all students are accommodated.

As mentioned earlier, students come from different socio-economic backgrounds. Those who work and study have to be accommodated, though not all carry jobs that relate to their degrees and career goals.

## **12. Describe the successes of the program and explain how they are documented.**

The evidence that the program has been successful comes from sustained assessment of the program, sustained in-service training of the teachers, increased test scores, and fewer student complaints than in the past. There is also an increased need for employees as the program grows.

Department archives and documents are also good evidence of the program's success. First, instructor performance evaluations that are done by students at the end of every semester, as well as evaluations done by the chair during the semester, provide the first clue to proper placement of teachers in the different classes. Second, teachers' own evaluations of the training they receive and their implementation of ideas introduced in that training have affected students' evaluations of the work of the whole department more positively. Third, because students are involved in the evaluation process, and because they are aware that they have a say in the whole process, their complaints are reduced to a minimum. This trend, in turn, has impacted the university's image more positively and led to increased numbers of students enrolling, and subsequently to an increased demand for new teachers.

The success is documented in the end-of-semester portfolios of students' detailed grades and teacher assessments. There are also student portfolios of the workshops conducted in the department. Records of students' narratives are also considered.

When the IEP students matriculate in the university and they become regular students, their grades on tests and quizzes are not lowered because of language problems, as opposed to the grades of some of those students who get a high TOEFL placement score and thus do not enroll in the IEP curriculum. That is, if a student gets a TOEFL score that entitles him/her to start a major directly, s/he may be better at one skill than another but his/her total TOEFL score



saved him/her from joining the IEP program. Such students may still have linguistic flaws, whereas students finishing the IEP will have had instruction in all the different skills. They will also have been exposed to a wider variety of materials, part of which relates to their major field of study. As such, the latter group has been better prepared for their future careers.