ESL Sector Proposed Change for Curricular Sequence

Title of sequence: Basic English Curricular Sequence

Introduction

Brief description: The English as a Second Language (ESL) Sector was established in 2004 to oversee evaluation and curriculum revision for the Basic Sequence (INGL 0066, 3101, 3102, 3201, 3202) which serves approximately half of the incoming UPRM class every year (approximately 1500 out of 3000). Any student who enters this university with an English as a Second Language Achievement Test (ESLAT) score below 570 is placed in this track; thus approximately 1500 freshmen enter this sequence. Most enter INGL 3101 (approximately 1100); however, those with ESLAT scores below 470 enter INGL 0066 (approximately 400).

In the past, curriculum development and revision have been done primarily for individual courses rather than for the sequence as a whole. Currently, the goal of the ESL Sector is to revise the curriculum of the entire basic sequence. In order to do this as wisely as possible, we surveyed students still in the sequence as well as students nearing graduation to get a better picture of how the older students had fared over the years with regard to their English-learning experience at Colegio. We also administered the standardized internationally used Vocabulary Levels Test (Nation & Beglar, 2007) and the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency to samples of students at all levels of the sequence as well as to those about to graduate.

Findings clearly pointed to a need for increased opportunities to overcome the fear of speaking as well as increased opportunities to prepare for using English in the pursuits and professions students were preparing to enter upon graduation. Once these findings were analyzed and our plan was formulated, we consulted with the directors of all departments that cooperated with our data-gathering efforts, that is all the departments in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (except English and Marine Sciences), representatives from Business Administration, the Dean of Agricultural Sciences, and representatives of the Faculty of Engineering. Overall, support was extremely positive for the proposed curricular revision.

Starting date: Fall 2011(pending approval).

A. Admission requirements
   Students scoring below 470 on the ESLAT will enter into INGL 0066 (an institutional-credit-only, pass/fail course). Students scoring 470-569 will enter into INGL 3101.
B. Academic requirements
   All academic departments on campus currently require four semesters of English. Students must pass each course in the sequence to move on to the next course. Students will have met their departments' four-semester English requirement if they pass the courses in the sequence with a D or higher. Students who enter the program in INGL 0066 must also pass it in order to enroll in INGL 3101.
C. Projected registration
   Approximately 1500 students begin in this sequence each academic year.

Justification

The Current Basic Track

All students entering the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez are required to take at least four semesters of English courses. They are placed into a specific English course based on their ESLAT (English as a Second Language Placement Test) or AP (Advanced Placement) English test scores. Currently, the UPRM offers a series of courses which the English department refers to as the "basic track," which is designed for students scoring 569 or lower on the ESLAT. These include the courses titled Basic I (3101) and Basic II (3102), followed by Reading and Composition I (3201) and Reading and Composition II (3202), all of which are 3 credit courses. Students who have ESLAT scores of 469 or lower must take Pre-Basic (0066), a non-credit course which they must pass as a requirement for entry into Basic I. Approximately 1,500 students (around 50%) enter the basic track every year.

Currently, placing into the Basic track is a disadvantage for students for several reasons:

a) Students placing into higher tracks will have choices as to which English course offerings they would like to take to complete their required four semesters. For example, they may choose public speaking, technical writing, film, etc. However, students entering the Basic track never get to choose an English course.
b) The current Basic Track curriculum currently operates on a generic, "one-size-fits-all" model. Emphasis is placed on grammar and vocabulary development and reading improvement, but until now the curriculum has not been based on student needs assessment.

Over the past three years, the ESL Sector of the department of English has been conducting an in-depth, multi-faceted needs analysis that includes the following components: opinion surveys of current basic track students, opinion surveys of graduating students in all faculties, skills assessment of basic track students using assessment loops and achievement tests, and input from all directors of all departments on campus. The curricular revision presented here is informed by all of this data, in addition to our input as ESL professionals.

Survey Results

In the Spring Semester 2006, the ESL Sector of the English department conducted a survey of graduating seniors from all academic faculties and many departments across the university in order to inform upcoming curricular change. The results revealed that compared to students entering in the intermediate and advanced tracks, students entering in the basic track:

- avoid using English outside of English class more often
- indicate a lesser degree of progress in conversational English and in particular informal conversation
- report difficulty speaking English with a North American
- reports of difficulty had a mode of 4 (frequent difficulty) and a mean of 3.24 on a 4 point scale.

4th year students who entered in the basic track expressed a very high demand for a Conversational English. 98% of those who began in pre-basic expressed a desire to have taken such a course and 84% of those who began in Basic English expressed a desire to have taken such a course.

Proficiency test results

The Michigan Test is a commonly-used, norm-referenced test of English language proficiency. It was given to all sections of Ingl 3201 and Ing 3202, plus several sections of Ingl 310l in 20XX. The results showed that our students are not progressing, as measured by the Michigan Test, in their listening nor in their grammar skills. Improvement could be noted in vocabulary and reading, though the results cannot be wholly attributed to the teaching of English within our Department due to external influences. Our "off-track" students (those who took pre-basic or who failed basic and are re-taking) who are enrolled in are not catching up with their peers.

Input from department chairs

ESL sector representatives spoke to all UPRM department chairs about the proposed curricular change. 100% of department chairs were in support of our proposed curricular change and all wrote letters of support indicating so.

Theoretical background

- Make grammar teaching/learning functional
- English for specific purposes
- Content-based language learning
- Writing/reading connection
- Make language learning more relevant to out students' own contexts and experiences

Justification for the Proposed Track Revision

- Disconnect between courses in the track
- Reluctance among students to swiftly finish course work because our courses don't seem applicable to their other course work
- Students penalized for being in the basic track
- Students in the 3103-3104 track have two choices while 3101/3102 students have no choice
- Discrepancy between basic track curriculum & English use in other courses
- We want to raise standards (not lower them!)
- Students can (and do) go on from failing pre-basic to successfully working in the states or even into our MAEE

Relationship between the program and the mission and strategic plan of the UPR system and with other programs

Relatedness to the UPR strategic plan and the RUM strategic plan

The structure and scope of the Department of English's basic program is conceived as part of strategic planning ensuring that its content reflects the mission, goals and objectives of UPRM.

In its effort to become a department characterized by excellence in teaching, research and service to the community, the Department of English mirrors UPRM primary goals. (Cert. #96-97-603) and contributes to the Continuous Improvement Educational Initiative (CIEI) initiated in early 2003.

Relationship of the program to other courses offered at UPRM and other campuses

(equivalencies) This curricular revision will not affect the programs of students, since the curricular sequence will still meet the 12 credit English requirement. Students transferring into UPRM who would normally be placed into INGL 3202 will have the choice between 3202, 3191 and other courses listed below.

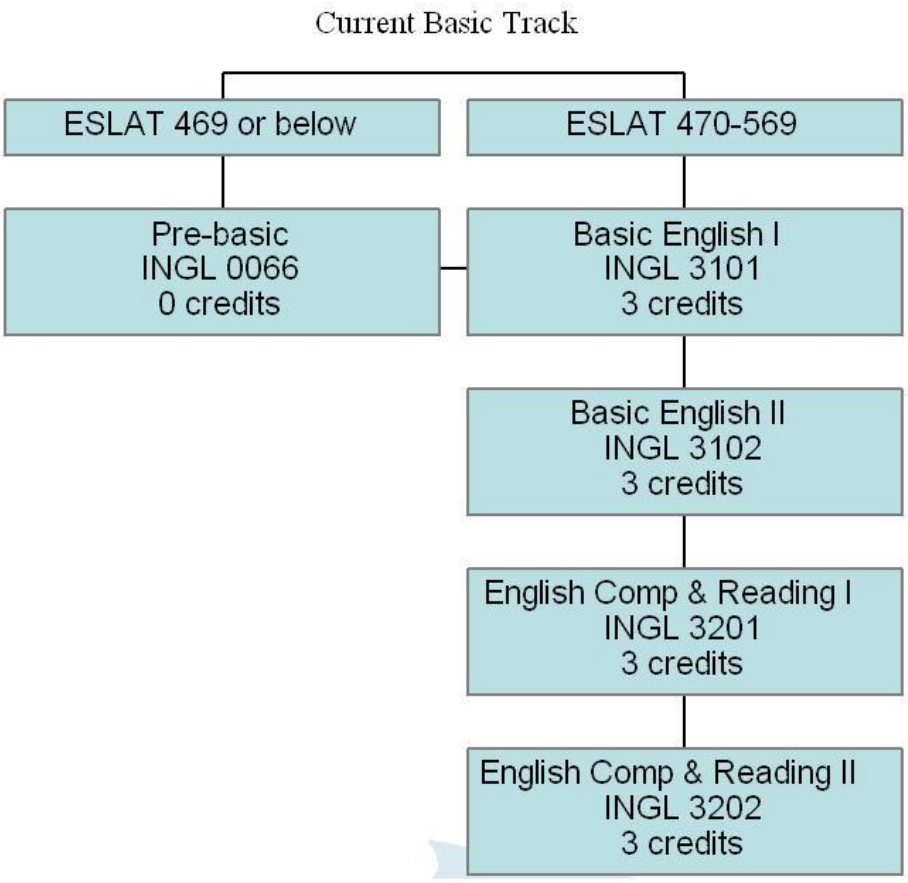
This new component establishes a connection with the expected student learning outcomes of the General Education program and evidences ownership of the essential learning outcomes established by the ESL Sector of the Department of English. In redressing weaknesses in the oral component of the ESL program, the Department of English is articulating educational priorities for the new millennium and allowing its faculty and staff to ingrate broad institutional goals with the intellectual and practical skills that are basic to the field of English as a second language.

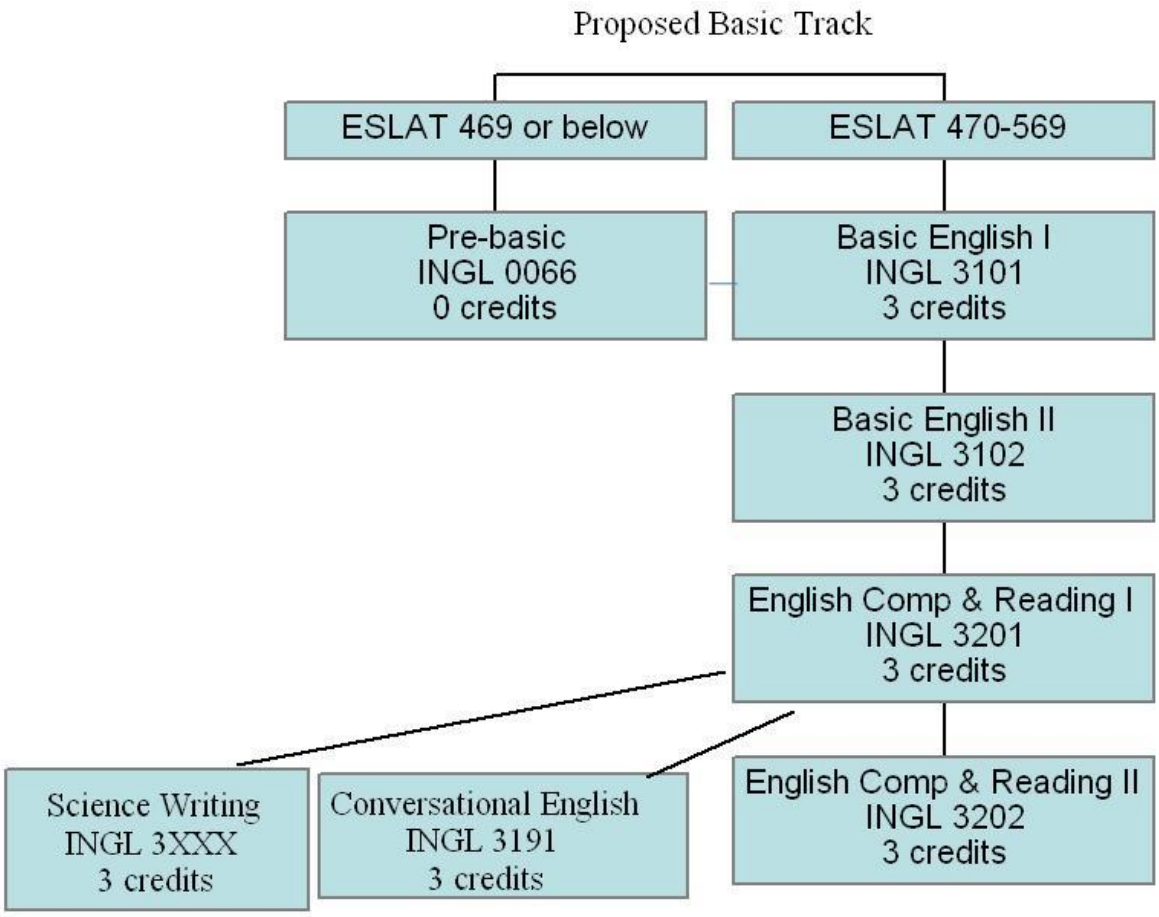
Student profile Relationship between the Students Profile and the Proposed Curriculum. The following Faculty or Arts and Sciences objectives will be met in the Basic English Track courses:

Student Profile (Faculty of Arts and Sciences Objectives)	The students will meet each one of the objectives in the student profile as follows:
Communicate effectively orally and in writing in English.	Embedded in all courses across the curriculum (English 0066/English 3101/3102/English 3201/3202/English 3191)
Think critically.	Embedded in all courses across the curriculum.
Synthesize knowledge appropriate to their discipline and apply it to the identification and solutions of problems.	Composition courses (English 3201/3202) or Communication in Science course.
Apply research methods and information technologies.	Information technologies: will be integrated in all courses across the curriculum. Apply research methods: will be integrated in English 3102/ English 3201/3202 and Science communication
Recognize the ethical implications of different actions and integrate ethical standards or codes into responsible decision making.	Integrated in all courses across the curriculum.
Develop an appreciation for the arts, the humanities, and the sciences.	Develop appreciation for the arts and humanities: English 0066/3101/3102/3201/3201 Appreciation for the sciences: science communication course
Engage in team work.	Integrated in all courses across the curriculum.

Curriculum Design

Present sequence versus proposed sequence





Sequence options. This sequence can be fulfilled by taking any of the following options: 3202, 3191, or 3XXX. Additional courses expand the sequence options available to students.

Curricular sequence

Alphanumeric Code	INGL 0066
Title:	Pre-basic English
Pre-requisites	n/a
Credits	institutional credit course
Course Description	Intensive training in basic language for students requiring remedial work.
Alphanumeric Code	INGL 3101
Title:	Basic English I
Pre-requisites	n/a
Credits	3

Course Description: This class is designed to improve students' speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities in English. The purpose of this class is for students to practice what they know and to learn more English so that they can successfully use English in their academic career. Students will speak English in class, listen to English, and read and write in English as well. They are expected to participate in class by talking to their instructors and to their classmates, by listening to their instructors and to their classmates, and by completing in-class and out-of-class assignments.

Alphanumeric Code	INGL 3102
Title:	Basic English II
Pre-requisites	INGL 3101
Credits	3

Course Description This class is designed to improve students' speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities in English. The purpose of this class is for students to practice what they know and to learn more English so that they can successfully use English in their academic career. Students will speak English in class, listen to English, and read and write in English as well. They are expected to participate in class by talking to their instructors and to their classmates, by listening to their instructors and to their classmates, and by completing in-class and out-of-class assignments.

Alphanumeric Code	INGL 3201
Title:	English Composition I
Pre-requisites	INGL 3102
Credits	3
Description	Practice in writing compositions and making oral reports upon selected readings, including essays, short stories, poems, dramas, and novels. Attention will be given as needed to grammar and idiomatic expressions. This course or its equivalent is a requisite for graduation.

Sequence options courses

Alphanumeric Code	INGL 3202
Title:	English Composition
Pre-requisites	INGL 3201
Credits	3

Description	Practice in writing compositions and making oral reports upon selected readings, including essays, short stories, poems, dramas, and novels. Attention will be given as needed to grammar and idiomatic expressions. This course or its equivalent is a requisite for graduation.

Alphanumeric Code	INGL 3191
Title:	Conversational English
Pre-requisites	INGL 3201
Credits	3
Description	Development of naturalness, correctness and clarity in conversational English; analysis and correction of individual faults in speech delivery; application of phonetics to problems of pronunciation and articulation in North American English.

Alphanumeric Code	INGL 3XXX
Title:	Science Communication
Pre-requisites	INGL 3201
Credits	3
Description	Theory and practice of effective communication, both written and oral, in the sciences. Attention will be focused on the essentials of communication in all sciences: reading, writing, listening and speaking in English as an additional language.

Methodologies

This curricular revision proposes the use of both strategy-based instruction and an integrative approach to the teaching of the four basic skills. Emphasis is given to reading and writing through the use integration of reading and writing strategies. The Basic English track will follow an integrative approach to the teaching of the four basic skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening through strategy-based instruction. It will also include the teaching of grammar and vocabulary learning strategies. Emphasis will be given to English in academic settings. The teaching of reading and writing will also follow a theme-based approach in which students read authentic materials. Basic English courses will also include fiction such as the reading of novels, poetry and short stories. Writing will also be integrated and Basic English courses include pre-writing strategies in which students generate ideas and learn how to write coherent paragraphs. By the end of the curricular

sequence, students will know how to not only identify rhetorical modes, but they also experience writing compositions based on these modes.

Listening and speaking will also be integrated in every course. Students will practice both reading and speaking as part of their language laboratory requirements in Basic English courses. It will also be required that students participate orally in both formal and informal speaking activities. In their composition course, students will be required to present a research paper in the INGL 3201 course. Both form and function will be assessed in speaking.

Assessment plan

Assessment tool	Individuals conducting assessment
Writing assignments	All professors and teaching assistants teaching in the ESL track
Exams, quizzes, homework, and diagnostic exams	All professors and teaching assistants teaching in the ESL track
Language laboratory reports	All professors and teaching assistants teaching pre-basic and basic English courses
Oral presentations/reports	All instructors teaching in the basic English track
Group work	All professors and teaching assistants teaching in the basic English track
Teaching assistant evaluations	All students
Teaching assistant observations	Graduate committee members of the English Department
Faculty evaluation	All students taking the course after the first ten weeks of class
Survey of students who finish the curricular sequence	The English as a Second Language (ESL) Sector
Assessment Portfolio of the Four Skills : reading/writing/speaking/listening	Professors and TAs teaching courses on the Basic English track

In an effort to establish the infrastructure, resources and training necessary to departmentalize, guide and support student learning outcomes assessment process and ESL program efforts, the English Department has appointed the following personnel

- Assessment Coordinator
- ESL Sector Coordinator
- Three Freshman level English Course Coordinators
- Writing Center Director
- CUE General Education Representative

II. Program administration

The English department will administer the program. No new administration is required for implementation.

III. Resources for teaching, investigation, and service

IV. Teaching facilities and laboratories—see lab proposal, talk about classroom resources

V. Student services—Writing Center, Language Laboratory

VI. Budget

No additional budget is required for the implementation of this curricular sequence.

VII. Evaluation plan

The ESL sector of the English Department, in collaboration and with the support of the English department's faculty and administration, will continue to develop assessment components by utilizing student learning outcomes to improve the teaching and learning of English as a second language. The assessment of ESL courses is primarily course-embedded and department/program based.