

Past, Status Quo, and Future of the Department of English

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Abstract:

This study offers an account and a critique of the undergraduate syllabus of the English department in Jordan. The aim is to explore its evolvement and dynamism and suggest what it should look like in the days ahead. It starts by taking note of a little-known but historic conference on the subject hosted by the University of Jordan (UJ) in 1982, which triggered much of the discourse on the subject and whose major premises are extremely relevant today. It then moves to discuss the English department's emergence and development, focusing on what the study sees as its three main phases: the colonial, the national/postcolonial, and the global/postmodern. While the discussion and the conclusions pertain to the English department in both Jordan and the Arab World, the specific examples are given on the basis of the experience of the English Department at UJ, the oldest and most influential in the country. Throughout, attention is paid to the three major components of the department syllabus: language, literature, and linguistics. The study confirms that a major preoccupation of the department should be with language and communication skills. Nevertheless, it needs to pay ample attention to other crucial skills, such as critical, analytical, aesthetic, and cultural skills – most of which can best be served through the literature component. In order for the department to continue to thrive, it has to deal with emerging challenges and societal pressures, including the zealous push for “language” per se or ESP programs, without fragmenting its own structure and compromising its sense of mission and coherence.

Keywords: English Department, English literature, English language, linguistics, English in Arab World

Past, Status Quo, and Future of the Department of English

In the past three decades English departments in Jordan, which epitomize English departments in the Arab World (Ibrahim1983, p. 20, Zughoul 1983, p. 30), have started to pay increasing attention to their mission or sense of purpose (John 1986, Salih 1986, Majdoubeh 1992, Obeidat 1997, Haggan 1999, Al-Kharabsheh et. al. 2009, among others). Before the 1980s, there was hardly any evidence they had “given much thought to their place or role in our universities and societies,” as Ibrahim aptly pointed out in 1983 (p. 19). What seems to have triggered and heightened their attention to their role is a milestone conference on the subject held at the University of Jordan (UJ) in 1982. The focus on the department’s role and welfare can also be attributed to the remarkable expansion of these departments in the country and the region: in the case of Jordan, from one in 1962 to about thirty in 2012 . Today the department in our part of the world, unlike the department in America which seems to be on the decline (Chace 2009), is in a strong position. Nevertheless, while it has succeeded in coping with many challenges, it will have to continue to do its best to address those which it is facing now in order to maintain its position of strength.

In what follows, and by way of delineating where the department stands and where it should be heading, I shall focus on the following three dimensions of the matter: how the department came into being in our part of the world, how it has developed, and what its structure, focus, and function should look like in the coming years. These dimensions are parallel to and embedded in the three phases which the study suggests the department went through, as manifested in its evolving study plans: the colonial, the national/postcolonial, and the global/postmodern. I shall argue throughout that what helped the department survive and thrive is its dynamic structure, its adaptability to change, and its multiple functions. Toward the end, I will highlight some of the new challenges that the department needs to face.

I. Literature Review

Several studies have tackled the subject. The most important of these appear in the proceedings of the UJ conference referred to above on “The Problems of Teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities,” which were published in 1983. The proceedings contain seventeen articles written by scholars from Jordan, the region, and abroad. Four are on the English department as a whole (Dahiyat & Ibrahim 1983, pp. 7-51), five on the literature component of the syllabus (Ibid, pp. 52-101), and eight on the language/linguistics component (Ibid, pp. 102-206). Many of the conclusions these studies reach are extremely relevant to the English department’s core mission in Jordan and the Arab World today and to the argument of this study. Three of the conclusions are noteworthy because they have, first, greatly influenced the department’s shape thereafter and, secondly, been endorsed by several subsequent studies. The first is that the department’s primary aim is to teach language (El-Mowafy 1983, p.11). To this end, there should be great emphasis, especially in the first two years, on language skills, particularly “composition and writing” since “the language component is the weakest” (Ibrahim p.28, p.24). The second is that English literature is relevant, even essential, to students’ needs, and that its primary purpose should be to serve language learning. According to Munro, the department needs to pay special attention to literature because “our students will have a far greater, richer, deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the English language. If TEFL is important, TEFLIT is equally so” (Munro 1983, p 60. See also Lott 1983, pp. 102-3). Some

conference participants suggested that emphasis should be put on “modern” literature and on prose rather than poetry (Zughoul 1983, p.36). I shall qualify this by saying that literature – both old and modern, poetry and prose – also serves a host of other skills, including critical and cultural skills, as Dahiyat pointed out (p. 63). The third is that linguistics, which most participants agree was arbitrarily placed in the department, does not serve language learning much: linguistics has “little to do with language teaching” (Ibrahim 1983, p.25) and “linguists lack the training in language teaching” (Zughoul 1983, p.40). I shall also qualify this by underscoring that linguistics does, to an extent, contribute to language learning by making students think about language and about some aspects that boost language learning (Haggan 1999).

In addition to the articles in the proceedings, I also rely in developing my argument on several studies that have tackled the subject from 1983 to the present. These, which will be acknowledged in the body of this essay as well as in the bibliography and which were primarily triggered by the proceedings, address further aspects related to the three components just mentioned: language, literature, and linguistics. The study also depends on a close analysis of the three major study plans of the English Department at UJ, from the sixties to the present.

II. The Study’s Main Thesis

The study proposes and seeks to crystalize the following thesis statement: The English department in Jordan has been able not only to survive but also thrive over the past five decades because of its flexibility in accommodating and balancing the three disciplines which compete for dominance in its syllabus: literature, language, and linguistics. What adds to its position of strength is also its accommodation of societal expectations in terms of the know-how and skills that English majors should possess. Nevertheless, societal pressures and expectations intensify and widen at this point in time pushing for the accommodation of an increasing number of other sub-fields, such as translation, applied English, and the various forms of ESP. For this reason, the department needs to prioritize and adopt only what it sees fit and reject what is irrelevant or distortive. This will enable it to continue to maintain its overall coherence and relevance and prevent erosion or fragmentation which, according to Chace, has harmed the English department in America (Chace 2009).

The thesis is arrived at on the basis of a close examination of the studies available on the subject, a close reading and critique of the components of the three major UJ study plans over the past five decades, and a careful look at some of the major contextual shifts that brought about such dramatic changes in the syllabus.

It should also be noted here that, in delineating the department’s evolvment and development, the study pinpoints the three major phases that the department has gone through: the colonial, the national/postcolonial, and the global/postmodern. While the first phase has been identified as such by some critics (as will be illustrated), the latter two have been identified by this study.

III. The Colonial Phase

When English was introduced as a university discipline in our part of the world, as early as the 1920s and 1930s (EL-Mowafy 1983, p. 9, Zughoul 1983, p.31), it was introduced as a department of English *literature*, with no significant language or linguistics components per se. This is clearly manifested in the first study plan which the UJ English Department adopted upon establishment in 1962 (Appendix I). A glimpse at the plan reveals that the program was almost

exclusively composed of English literature courses. Students throughout the 1960s had to study, after a year of general university requirements including some English, mainly 3-credit, year-long courses dealing with English single authors, eras of English literature, and historical and social contexts from the Medieval to the modern period. These included courses on Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, the eighteenth century, Romanticism, Victorianism, and the twentieth century. There were also a couple of courses on Greek and Roman Mythology and an introduction to Western Civilization. There was one course on the History of English. And there were only two 2-credit hour courses on linguistics and one single 1-credit hour course on translation.

What is also obvious is the total absence of language-skills courses throughout the specialization years, which today we consider essential. Additionally, the philological dimension, aside from the two courses on linguistics and the course on the history of English, was absent. Almost all faculty members were native speakers of English, from Britain and America.

The conclusion one draws, on the basis of this study plan and as some scholars have stated, is that the UJ English Department throughout the 1960s, as the case was generally throughout the Arab world, was an exact copy of the English department in Britain. Zughoul calls it “a replica of departments of English at home, i.e., at British universities” (1983, p. 21). It is a “replica” precisely because it was a department of literature, not language or linguistics. It is a known fact that the British colonized much of the Arab World in the first half of the twentieth century and when the English departments were set up, they were set up “in the days of colonialism” (Zughoul 1983, p. 31) based on the British model.

The department’s “coloniality” stems from two main factors. The first is that the department, as one infers from Terry Eagleton, was introduced due to the influence of imperialist Britain. According to Eagleton, there was a direct link between the creation of English literature as a discipline in Britain on the one hand and British nationalism and colonialism on the other. Asserting both points in *Introduction to Literary Theory*, he says: “English literature rode to power on the back of wartime nationalism” (p.26), giving the British great “pride in their national language and literature” (p.22). He also adds that the rise of English in the early twentieth century in Britain becomes inevitably, by virtue of this very nationalist dimension and Britain’s place in the world, part and parcel of British imperialism and colonialism: “The era of academic establishment of English is also the era of high imperialism in England” (Eagleton 1996, p.24). It is due to such rationale that the department was a department of *English* literature. Among the long list of courses in the UJ study plan, there was not one single course on American, Canadian, Australian or even Scottish or Irish literature – let alone global literature. It is interesting in this context to point out the doubleness of meaning, and thus the doubleness of hegemony and influence, implied in the word “English” in the department’s title: “English” meaning literature, not language or linguistics, and English referring to the literature of England per se.

The second factor in the department’s coloniality pertains to its disregard of students’ specific needs. The mere assumption that what suits Britain and British students should suit Arab society and students is highly problematic, to say the least, as El-Mowafy has pointed out (10). Why would our students enroll in a BA program in which *all* the courses belong to a foreign culture and literature with no direct relevance to their own culture and literature? The case against the department’s early form, one concludes, is precisely that no adaptation or acculturation took place in introducing the program to learners. Granted, English literature is partly relevant to our students, as many ended up teaching English literature at school.

Nevertheless, even those who went on upon graduation to teach English at schools, they had to teach primarily language skills. Clearly, there is a gap here: students needed more training in language and communication skills and some linkage with Arabic literature and culture (El-Mowafy 1983, p.12-13).

It is interesting to note that even those departments, such as the UJ English department, which came into existence after the British Mandate officially ended in the late 1940s for most Arab countries continued to copy the same model that commenced during the Colonial era. And when Jordanian or Arab professors, who were native speakers of Arabic, obtained their doctorates in English and started teaching in these departments, they continued to teach what the founding British professors were teaching, with no alteration (El-Mowafy 1983, p. 9-10). El-Mowafy's position is typical of some scholars who later became critical of the colonial department. Says he: "It is not a wild guess to think that deep in the national consciousness there lurks the suspicion that those Arab specialists of English or French can't be real nationals Have they not taken over from foreigners?" (p.9).

It must be made clear, however, that even though the colonial department was criticized for privileging courses in English literature over language skills, these same scholars do recognize that literature contributes substantially to language learning (Ibrahim 1983). So, their criticism – one infers – was not so much of the fact that the English department taught English literature per se but that it taught *only* English literature . Therefore, despite the absence of thinking about meeting learners' or society's needs and despite the absence of language skills, the department did graduate quality students whose command of English enabled them to complete the program successfully and to find rewarding jobs. This is one lesson learned from the colonial department.

The second lesson, and this is a paradox one should not lose sight of, is that the colonial and the postcolonial are always intertwined. Regardless of the colonialist intentions, those students who study the literature of colonial powers or foreign literature in general always end up becoming empowered, not pacified, "softened" (Eagleton 1986, p. 24), brainwashed, or subscribing to the viewpoint of the "masters" (Eagleton 1986, p. 22). They are always able to understand the colonial culture better, critique it, deconstruct it, and come to terms with it. *Studying* a foreign culture, even when its values are diametrically opposed to one's own, not only yields crucial moral and intellectual advantages but is a necessity for challenging and thus fostering one's own faith in one's own culture (Asfour 1983, Majdoubeh 1992). This is especially true in the case of English literature. A great example is Edward Said. Among many, he was a product of the early version of the English department who went on to build a career on deconstructing Orientalism and Western colonialism, making ample use of his knowledge of English literature and culture, and to become one of the icons of post-colonialism, a school of thought that unmasked and disarmed the colonial school (*Orientalism* 1979, *Culture and Imperialism* 1994). Inadvertently, and unlike what is *intended*, the colonialists end up empowering the colonial subjects. As Mustafa Sa'eed, himself a colonial subject turned postcolonial, has eloquently put it in his diary in *Season of Migration to the North*, "We teach people ... But we cannot guarantee the result" (Salih 1969, p.151).

III. The National, Post-colonial Phase

The colonial phase, which, as has been illustrated, extended beyond the actual colonial period, ends with the end of the 1960s, as clear from the department's radical study plan shift

(Appendix II). As of the early seventies a new phase, which I call the national/ post-colonial, begins to unfold. With this new phase – which can be divided into two stages, that of the 1970s (the national) and that which begins with the early 1980s (the postcolonial) and extends well into the new century – the English department changes dramatically. It even transforms, especially in the first stage. The study plan itself begins to noticeably, even drastically, alter, and so does the composition of the academic staff, the vast majority becoming national (El-Mowafy 1983, p. 10). Regarding the Arab World, Arab nationalism continues to climax and brings about both abrupt and slow changes, including – in a way – the “nationalization” of the English department, among the overall “nationalization” of universities and other institutions. In Jordan, the 1970s witnessed the birth of another major national university, Yarmouk University (1976), and therefore another English department. From then onwards, other universities started emerging, always with an English department that is *core* to university structure. The paradoxical point to stress here is that the end of the colonial period did not see the end of the English department but its further rise and multiplication, with one difference: the department survives and thrives in an altered form. At UJ also, the early 1970s witness a distinct academic event, the shift from the British year-system to the American credit-hour system. This heralds a major, milestone shift in the department’s life.

Such shift is most clearly seen in the new study plan which the department at UJ adopted (Appendix II). For one thing, many language-skills courses were introduced. The compulsory list, which all students had to take, included: Writing (1), Study Skills, Advanced Grammar, Writing (2), and Pronunciation and Speech. The long language/linguistics electives list, of which students could take up to 18 credit hours, was composed of about nine courses, such as Comprehension and Advanced Writing, Studies in English Grammar, the Tense in English, the Art of Writing and Expression, etc. There were also many linguistics courses. The compulsory list included two courses on Phonetics and Linguistics, and the electives included several courses, such as Advanced Linguistics, Comparative Linguistics, Schools of Language, Sociolinguistics, Advanced Phonetics, a Research Seminar in Linguistics, etc. There were also, among the electives, two courses on translation and two on teaching English as a Foreign Language. The rest of the courses, a majority, were in literature. It is interesting to note here that the “English” department, by which was originally meant English “literature,” becomes now a department of English Language and Literature, with “language” coming before “literature.” The official degree the graduate obtains is also one in English language and literature (Appendix II).

Several conclusions can be drawn from the components of the 1970s study plan. The first is that it has undergone a fundamental *structural* change, and not just minor alteration or reshuffling of some components, as in later decades. This makes the 1970s plan truly stand out as a milestone development. Obviously, literature no longer reigned supreme, but it did remain the more fundamental component: the majority of the long list of compulsory courses are in literature, and a student desirous of studying more literature can choose up to 18 hours from the electives list. Nevertheless, there are so many other language and linguistics courses to choose from. The second is the study plan’s obvious liberalism, which derives its spirit from the American credit-hour system. The liberalism works at two levels. The first is that, while the student does not have a choice in compulsory courses, he/she has a lot of choices from the electives list. Not only is the list long enough to offer so many options, but – more importantly – a student can choose all the 15-18 hours from the literature list, the language/linguistics list, or from both. The second level of liberalism is that, for the first time ever, the student has the

choice to major in English and minor in another subject: education, business, Arabic, etc. The third conclusion is that, for the first time also, the study plan is no longer imported wholesale. National demands begin to influence what students can and should study. For example, the introduction of the language skills courses recognizes the fact that the students are non-native speakers and therefore they need a solid base in language skills before and after they embark on specialized literature or linguistics courses. Furthermore, the introduction of a main major and a minor, as opposed to a single major, is greatly influenced, in the case of Jordan, by the Ministry of Education, which was sending a large number of students to the university to obtain a bachelor's degree and then join it as teachers in schools. The Ministry wanted the students to minor in education so that they will be better prepared for their profession as teachers of English. The fourth conclusion is that the study plan comes with the aim of striking a balance between literature and the growing influence of linguistics, especially since several faculty members joining the department are specialists in linguistics. Faculty members' specializations at both Jordanian and Arab universities do influence the fate of the syllabus in their departments (Ibrahim 1983, p.24).

This was the picture in the 1970s: an English department the majority of whose faculty members were nationals, whose core curricular components reflected the demands of the new national phase, whose study plan had a core of literature and strong components of language and linguistics to complement students' learning, and whose liberal philosophy allowed students to make many choices.

This 1970s structure continued to manifest itself strongly in the second stage, of the post-colonial phase, i.e. throughout the three decades that unfolded since then. A look at the study plan of the 1980s and 1990s and onwards shows that it underwent largely *minor*, though significant, shifts and changes (Appendix III) . Some of the amendments were progressive, some were regressive. Many of the courses that existed in the 1970s remained but were shifted or joggled in and out of the compulsory and elective lists. The long lists of electives were shortened, and the students' choices were curtailed. There was essentially one list of compulsory courses combining together literature, language, and linguistics courses, with literature courses being still more in number; and one list of electives – also combining language, literature and linguistics (Appendix III).

Three developments during these three decades, however, are worth highlighting. The first is the appearance of some totally new courses, mainly in the electives list, as an attempt to present courses relevant in some employment spheres. These include Writing in the Field of Journalism, Debating and Dialogue, Creative Writing, Introduction to American Studies, etc. These, however, remain, in my view, at best shy attempts to respond to market and societal needs and emerging fields of interest. The second is a development related to the literature component. Over the years, other world literatures in English started cropping up in the study plan. For instance, a whole course on world literature was introduced in the 1970s, which focused on Western authors and the more ancient literature. At present, the course on Modern World Literature introduces a wider variety of authors from the Western and Non-Western worlds. This, again, is another shy attempt at expanding into what is called nowadays "literature in English". The third is the growing importance of literary theory courses, focusing on postcolonial topics such as Orientalism, feminism, psychoanalysis, etc. The fourth is the heightened interest in foreign languages. French was introduced as an independent major in the early 1980s. In the late 1980s, other foreign languages followed, including German, Italian, Spanish, Korean, Chinese

etc. The point to stress here is that the introduction of these languages as “joint” bachelor’s programs strengthened the demand on and the position of the English department rather than weakened it, for students who specialized in these foreign languages had to take a lot of English from the department so as to graduate as joint specialists in German/English, Chinese/English, etc. Offering a joint program in languages proves to be a very pertinent idea in light of the current emphasis on bilingualism or even multilingualism (Graddol 1997, p. 3, Graddol 2006, p.19, Doiz, et. al. 2011). Furthermore, when the idea of studying English for the purpose of teaching, through the so-called “field teacher” program, was introduced at UJ’s Faculty of Educational Sciences in the 1990s, students enrolled in this specialization also took a large number of courses from the department.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these developments. The first is that the department begins to diversify course offerings beyond the typical language, literature, and linguistics courses into other related fields – such as the Language of the Journalism, Creative Writing, etc. The second is that the department begins to be a provider for students from other specializations: the “filed” teacher in Education, the specialists in “joint” foreign-language degrees, etc. The ultimate conclusion, on the basis of these two conclusions is the mounting, not the diminishing, importance and centrality of the English department.

IV. The Global, Postmodern Phase

In 2011/2012, which falls within what we know as the height of the global, postmodern era (Jameson 1991), we find the department academically structured as has been described: a major component of English literature and two substantial language skills and linguistics components complementing it, in addition to a small miscellany of ESP and other courses that are put mainly in the electives list. Some departments offer a translation component for market or cultural considerations.

Even though the department has so far succeeded in balancing pressures and demands (John 1986, Salih 1986, Obaidat 1997, Haggan 1999) and has survived and is thriving, its position of strength should not be taken for granted. There is a potential threat that could come from some of the same factors that affected its counterpart in the U.S. negatively (Chace 2009). The potential threat stems from several factors. The first, and most serious, is the absence of strategic thinking. As the case is in institutions in the Arab world generally, there is no specific body within the university that thinks strategically for programs. Almost always changes are initiated not collectively, but by single individual faculty members or administrators, often in response to ideas or pressures that come from without. Such pressure is not to be underestimated. Of course, changes have to go through the formalities of councils, but such processes are largely formalities. Additionally, while some decisions are made bottom up, many are made top down. In Jordan, the Ministry of Higher Education has shifted from legislating and facilitating at a macro level into governing and concerning itself with a lot of micro matters, which cripples university autonomy – and thus that of the department. Some decisions are also made by chairpersons and deans without due consultation with faculty members. In the absence of strategic thinking, such influences often result in impulsive or subjective decisions. Additionally, administrators change frequently. In the past decade, UJ experienced six different presidents, with each of whom a new team comes to govern, bringing with them new ideas which replace those that have hardly been put in place. Abrupt changes and hasty decisions are distortive. The ultimate outcome is a series

of capricious pulls and pushes, unsuccessful attempts to accommodate so many emerging ideas, expectations and conflicting demands.

The second reason is, paradoxically, the increasing demand on English itself. There is competition with English, of course, from specializations like business and others (Ibrahim 1983, pp.19-20). Nevertheless, the department is still doing well, in fact attracting more students than it can accommodate. This is due to the still high demand on English. English is seen by many as essential for employment and survival in the marketplace (Ibrahim 1983, Zughoul 1983). Additionally, in our society, unlike in many others internationally, there is a population “bulge” which guarantees the continued flow of clients to most university specializations (Assaad & Roudi Fahmi 2007, Steityeh 2010). This, in turn, heightens the demand on the current department.

However, it is this upsurge of interest in language and the ambiguity or false notions about how to best realize it that may affect the department negatively, threatening its very structure and existence. It is a situation where a blessing could become a curse. The demand for language, in other words, may encourage some to drastically reshuffle the structure and content of the existing study plan so as to increase what they call “language” courses. They may even opt to transform the whole department into a “language” department. This is neither far-fetched nor paranoia on part of those who believe in the current form, structure, and content. Already some, within the academic world and outside it, are frowning at the literature component, questioning its relevance to students’ needs. (Zughoul 1983).

Already also, some universities, bowing to pressure for English for the market, have started opening some BA programs in ESP or “applied” English. For example, UJ has opened one, copying a program which has been in operation at another, Jordan University of Science and Technology. Clearly, there is no problem in experimenting with new programs *in addition* to the English program as we know it, or in having some universities adopt some new programs and others stick to the classic ones and their slightly modified versions. But the ESP or applied English can be a threat to the English department if it is injected as a major component in it or – in extreme cases – if it replaces it. The problem, of course, in incorporating too many components in the English department is that the department loses its coherence and character. And this is the second reason Chace mentions behind its decline: the syllabus becomes too fragmented to be of any benefit. Says he, “English has become less and less coherent as a discipline ...[a]mid a chaos of curricular change” (para.24 of 41). It is this fragmentation, this derailing from focus, that could threaten the English department.

Certainly the department should grow and respond to change positively. It should be dynamic, not static – and so far it *has* been. And it has also survived and thrived because, in the words of McDougal, it has evolved within the context “of its own culture and history” (2010, p.360). But in the days ahead, it needs to maintain its focus, priorities, and character. The best way to teach English is through the current, evolved structure: a strong literary component (yes, even including Spenser and Shakespeare), augmented by relevant linguistics and language-skills courses (Sage 1987, Stern 1991, Collie & Slater 1990). Through literature we can teach language (Hismanoglu 2005), and literature puts language in context, textually and culturally. One or two courses in ESP or “applied” English may be necessary, but a heavy dose of it isn’t. Some training courses in ESP or applied English outside the department are encouraged, as ESP at such a level is both useful and growing in popularity (Anthony 2001). A whole program on ESP or applied English is very problematic.

One would argue, on the basis of experience, that ESP and applied English as whole programs are largely a red herring. For one thing, how does one teach an ESP program? One understands a student of business learning the language of business through business courses, a student of law through law courses, a student of engineering through engineering courses, etc. But how can a student of “language” learn the language of business, law, engineering, etc. *together*? In an “applied” English course at UJ, a teacher was teaching students “the language of law” through asking them to read and interpret law texts. The students kept complaining: “We do not understand these concepts; we are not law students.” So they ended up memorizing the texts. There is no “bare” or “naked” language out there to have a department for. For another, assuming that ESP or applied English works and that one finds the right textbooks, it would be too narrow and too limiting to fulfill students’ overall needs: “it teaches learners enough English to survive in certain narrowly defined venues but not enough to thrive in the world at large” (Belcher 2004, p.165). We should not forget that ESP courses are, in the first place, “tailored to fit the specific needs of the students” (Basturkmen 2010, p.143) and not their general needs. Furthermore, how many disciplines can one put in an ESP or applied English program without eroding it and without graduating jacks of all trades? A whole ESP or applied English program would suffer exactly from what Chace has referred to above: it would lack the bare minimum coherence enabling it to *be* a discipline.

Furthermore, our students do not need the language of the media to be able to work in the media, the language of business to work in business, the language of tourism to work in tourism, etc. What they need is not the *specific* English of ESP but the *general* English that one finds in the classic department (in its postmodern, improved form – that is): in language-skills courses, short stories, plays, essays, poems, novels, and good books; in other words, in good-old basic, solid English. In all of these literary genres one finds narrators or characters speaking the general, varied, every-day English of communication in numerous life situations. It is the English of life, which *includes* the language of business letters, media, diplomacy, etc. When students graduate with solid general English, they can excel in any job with some training. Employers need to play a complementary role by giving short training courses in the specific line of work they focus on, rather than expect the department to graduate students in the specific or narrow field they require, which is one of thousands of narrow fields. An impossibility for the department to handle.

It should also go without saying that the role of the department should by no means be confined to the teaching/learning of language. We do not open a whole BA program just to teach our students listening, reading, writing, speaking, and understanding. As much as our students need language skills, they also need analytical, critical, aesthetic, and – of great importance these days – cultural or cross-cultural skills (Hogan 2007, Hannigan 1990, Gay 2002, Tarawneh 1986).

V. Conclusions

The English department in our part of the world has evolved and developed steadily over the years, as primarily evident from the UJ successive study plans and the critical discourse on the subject. As a result, and because of its relative flexibility in accommodating emerging trends and demands, it is now thriving despite competition from other disciplines. What needs to be done to bolster its status and prevent any reversal of the growth trend is to continue to pay careful attention to its content, modifying it somewhat in order to keep abreast with emerging

developments, but without eroding or fragmenting it. There should always be insistence on a solid core and a flexible periphery. The core, as made clear from the discussion above, should consist of a solid language- and communication-skills package, a strong literature component, and a few relevant linguistics courses. The language and communication package should focus on the four skills but prioritize reading and writing. The literature component should be built around not English literature per se, as the current practice is, but literature in English. The approach could be generic (i.e. focusing on the main genres of literature) rather than historic, and it should represent the best in world literature from the five continents, including Arabic literature in English. Such a shift will make the department global rather than colonial and – through some emphasis on Arabic literature in translation – more linked to the Arab cultural context. The periphery could accommodate a host of diverse courses or mini-packages catering to specific student needs and interests: press and media, film studies, communication, cultural studies, creative writing, teaching English, translation, area studies, etc. In practical terms, I propose a study plan that is a developed, refined, and improved form of the 1970s study plan, capitalizing on its strictness in the core and liberalism and freedom of choice in the periphery.

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Appendix I: The 1960s Study Plan

First Year:

- Arabic		3 hrs.
- English	3 hrs.	
- History	3 hrs.	
- Geography		3 hrs.
- Philosophy and Sociology	3 hrs.	
- Education and Psychology	3 hrs.	

Second Year:

- English Literature: History & Social Background I	3 hrs.	
- English Literature: History & Social Background II	3 hrs.	
- Shakespeare and His Times		3 hrs.
- Linguistics		2 hrs.
- Special Subject: Metaphysical Poets		2 hrs.

- Arabic 3 hrs.
- History of Islam 2 hrs.

Third Year:

- English Literature I (Chaucer to Spenser) 2 hrs.
- English Literature II (Milton to Dryden) 2 hrs.
- Special Subject: The Eighteenth Century 3 hrs.
- Literary Criticism 2 hrs.
- Linguistics 2 hrs.
- Western Civilization 3 hrs.
- Greek and Roman Mythology 2 hrs.

Fourth Year:

- English Literature: The Romantic Period 3 hrs.
- American Literature: To the Twentieth Century 3 hrs.
- Shakespeare 3 hrs.
- Special Subject: The Victorian Period 2 hrs.
- History of the English Language 3 hrs.
- Translation 1 hr.

Appendix II: The 1970s Study Plan (These are the specialization requirements, after a year of university and faculty requirements in which students who fail a proficiency exam take 3 credit hours of English)

A. Compulsory Courses: (all 3 credit hours)		Singles Major	Main Major
- Writing (1)		x	x
- Study Skills		x	x
- Advanced Grammar		x	x
- Writing (2)		x	x
- Phonetics		x	x
- Pronunciation and Speech	x		x
- Linguistics		x	x
- Medieval & Renaissance English Lit.	x	2 courses	
- 17 th Century Lit.	x		
- 18 th Century Lit.	x		
- Romantic & Victorian Lit.	x		
- 20 th Century English Lit.	x		
- American Lit. before 1900	x	1 course	
- 20 th Century American Lit.		x	
- Poetry		x	2 courses
- Drama		x	
- The Novel and Short Story	x		
- Criticism		x	x
- World Lit. (1): Homer to Reformation	x		-
- Shakespeare		x	-
	60	39	

- Single-Major student to choose 18 hours of electives from one or the other, or both, of the following two lists.
- Main-Major student to choose 15 hours of electives from one or the other, or both, of the following two lists:

List A: Language and Linguistics (all 3-credit hour courses)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehension and Advanced Writing - Phonology - Translation of Arabic Texts - Art of Writing & Expression - Schools of Linguistics - Teaching English as a Foreign Language (1) - Old English - Advanced Phonetics - Tense in English - Seminar in Linguistics - History of English - Generative phonology - Psycholinguistics - Seminar in Linguistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - English Rhetoric - Advanced Linguistics - Studies in English Syntax - Comparative Linguistics - Sociolinguistics - Special Subject (1) - Medieval English - English Morphology - Special Subject (2) - Advanced Trans. of Arabic Texts - Transformational Grammar - Dialects - TEEL (2) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

List B: Literature

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literary Appreciation - Short Story - Greek & Roman Mythology - Special Subject - The Novel & Short Story (2) - Milton - Arab English Writers - Metaphysical Poets - Drama (2) - Art of the Essay - World Lit. 2: Reformation to Present - The Epic - Lit. of the Absurd - Dryden & Pope - Special Subject (2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 17th and 18th Century Prose - 17th and 18th Century Drama - Chaucer - Studies in Romanticism - 20th Century World Lit. - Yeats and Eliot - Seminar in Lit. - Studies in Eliz. Lit. - Eliz. and Jacobean Drama - Literary Criticism - Seminar in Lit. (2) - Drama before Shakespeare - Shakespeare (2) - James Joyce |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Appendix III: The 2009/2010 Study Plan (These are the specialization requirements, after a year of university and faculty requirements among which there are 6 hours of remedial courses in English for students who fail the English Proficiency Test)

A. Compulsory Courses (a total of 66 credit hours; all 3 credit hours)

- Introduction to English Literature
- Oral Skills
- Writing
- Reading and Listening Comprehension
- Advanced Writing
- Syntax (1)
- English Phonetics
- English Linguistics
- English Literature until 1660
- American Literature until 1800
- Drama
- Writing Research Papers
- Syntax (2)
- English Literature from 1660-1798

19th-Century English Literature
American Literature in the 19th-Century
Novel (1)
Shakespeare
20th -Century English Literature
20th -Century American Literature
Criticism and Literary Theory
Ancient and Classical Literature

B. Elective Courses (a total of 18 credit hours from the following list; all 3 credit hour courses)

The Short Story
Professional Technical Writing
Discourse Analysis in English
English Transformational Grammar
English Semantics
Pronunciation and Speech
Novel (2)
Poetry
Modern World Literature
Translation 1 (English-Arabic)
Translation 2 (Arabic- English)
Special Subject in Translation
Writing in the Field of Journalism
Debating and Dialogue
English Socio-linguistics
History of the English Language
Psycholinguistics
English as a Foreign Language
Creative Writing
Seminar on Literature
Introduction to American Studies
Special Subject in English Literature
Special Subject in English Language