

FP Jareeda

In this Issue

Foundation Program
Academic Excellence
Week Guest Speaker:
Professor Emeritus
David Nunan 3

Using Reflective Strategies to Encourage
Student Engagement 4

Bi-Annual Fall 2020
Entrepreneurial
Presentations Competition 5

International Tutor
Certificate Training 6

Concept Checking in
the Digital Classroom 7

Faculty Focus: Shamsa
Alrushaidi – First
Khaleeji Instructor in
FPDE 8

Faculty Focus: Kashif
Raza, Faculty Senate
Member 9

Remembering Bob:
1958 – 2018 11

Student Focus -
Alanoud Al-Maahdeed:
Experiences of an
Online Learner 12

Welcome to Issue 21

James Scotland, Chair of the Foundation Program's Newsletter Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Welcome to issue 21 of the Foundation Program's quarterly newsletter, FP Jareeda.

This issue contains three articles about the Foundation Program Department of English's (FPDE) Second Virtual Academic Excellence Week.

Ahmad Hazratzad's article gives an overview of the event while articles by Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane and Paul

Ames take a deep dive into two of the sessions.

In addition, Raed Marabeh's article is about the training that faculty received from the Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies (CIAPS).

I hope that you enjoy reading issue 21.



James Scotland: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

The FPDE's Second Virtual Academic Excellence Week

Ahmad Hazratzad, Lead of Professional Development Team, Academic Excellence & Professional Development Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program (FP), under the Deanship of General Studies, held its 2nd virtual event, *Academic Excellence Week*, through the MS Teams platform from 7th to 9th December, 2020. The event was held under the supervision of the Foundation Program Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee (AE-PDC).

Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, Director of the Foundation Program, considers *The Academic Excellence Week* event to be one of the most important ways in which the FP raises its faculty's aware-

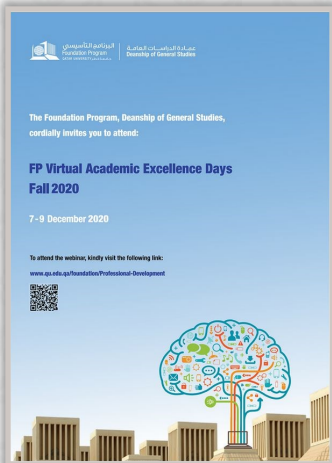
ness of the teaching practices that can maximize the learning and performance of students who enroll in the FP. The *Academic Excellence Week* included training workshops focusing on innovative methods that enhance teaching and learning, with the participation of researchers and experts from a number of universities inside and outside Qatar. There were approximately 1200 attendees.



Dr. Mohammad Manasreh, Head of the Foundation Program Department of English, gave a welcome address and stressed the importance of the *Academic Excellence Week* event with its aim of enriching faculty's knowledge of academic content and enhancing their instructional techniques to increase student achievement.

The efforts of the FP to advance teaching and learning as part of the education process are in line with Qatar University's strategy in which educational excellence is one of the most important pillars in achieving the desired education model at Qatar University. Moreover, the professional and academic development of faculty members, ensuring that they are up to date with the latest methods of distance education and the exchange of experiences, effectively contributes to improving the quality of education and learning outcomes for students in the FP.

There were seven presentations in the field of Teaching



English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), from internationally reputable educational institutions from Qatar, the USA, Australia, Finland, and Hong Kong. The event covered topics as diverse as maximizing online student engagement to strategies for better time management. The event contained presentations titled *Revisiting Learner-Centered Education*; *EAP: What can we learn from published articles in terms of research focus and theoretical orientations?*; *Distance Teaching and Sustainability: Where does it begin?*; *English Language Reading Comprehension: Perspectives from a Higher Education Sector*; *Opportunities and Techniques for Increasing Student Engagement in Learning*; *Individual vs Institutional Responses to Emergency Remote Teaching*; and *Strategies for Better Time Management*.

There were extremely positive comments from both speakers and attendees alike. Professor David Nunan, one of our presenters said, "I found it a very well-organized, high quality event with a range of professional plenary speakers." The speakers reflects the quality of the event in terms of its professionalism, organization, and the diversity of the topics covered.

The *Second Academic Excel-*



Dr. Mohammad Etedali, Head of English Department, Joutsenon University, Finland; Professor Mehdi Riazi, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Australia; Ahmad Hazratzad, Foundation Program Department of English, Qatar University: Screenshot courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

lence Days Event 2020 was organized by the professional development team of the FP Academic Excellence Committee: Ahmad Hazratzad (AE-PDC lead), Anwar Ghanim Al-Fetlawi (AE-PDC member), Paul Anthony Ames (AE-PDC member), Yasaman Amiri Aghdam (AE-PDC member), and Maimuna Aghliw (AE-PDC member). The event could not have happened without the full support of the university man-

agement and the FP, and the guidance, supervision and support of Naima Sarfraz (AE-PDC chair), and Dr. Mohammad Manasreh (FPDE HoD). Special thanks also go to Sarah Aw for her invaluable assistance.

Foundation Program Academic Excellence Week Guest Speaker: Professor Emeritus David Nunan

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On 7th December 2020, the Foundation Program hosted its 2nd virtual event, *Academic Excellence Week*. The first guest speaker was the well-known scholar, researcher and linguist, Professor Emeritus David Nunan. His talk, *It won't work here: Revisiting Learner-Centered Education*, focused on “the theoretical, empirical and practical changes that have occurred to learner-centered curriculum”.

Professor Nunan began his talk by asking, “What is learner-centered education?” Professor Nunan answered this question with the following statement,

The key difference between learner-centered and traditional curriculum development is that in the former, the curriculum is a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught.

He mentioned some key educational developments such as analytical syllabus design, the experiential/constructivist approach to education, learning strategies and processes, text and task authenticity, learner-authentication, language learning beyond the classroom, and learner-autonomy.

Professor Nunan strongly advocates the experiential/constructivist approach to education; this approach asserts that new experiences that connect to an existing experience promote reflection on the part of learners, which in turn enables them to modify existing ideas, apply what they have learned to the world around them and thus build new learning competencies. He also discussed learning strategies like memorizing, classifying, deduc-



Professor David Nunan, Director of the MA TESOL program and David Nunan TESOL Institute, Anaheim University; Mohammad A.A Manasreh, Head of the Foundation Program Department of English, Qatar University; Anwar Ghanim Al-Fetlawi, Foundation Program Department of English, Qatar University; Naima Sarfraz, Foundation Program Department of English, Qatar University; Ahmad Hazratzad, Foundation Program Department of English, Qatar University: Screenshot courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

ing, inducing, concept-mapping, reflecting, and brainstorming as ‘the mental and communicative procedures learners use in order to acquire and deploy a second language’. Also important is text and task authenticity that can validate the learning experience; this is best achieved through task-based learning assignments which focus on the creation and exchange of meanings, have a concrete outcome, and connect classroom work with the real world.

He emphasized learner-autonomy as a fundamental aspect of effective learning, citing influential psychologists and researchers such as Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Jerome Bruner, and Stephen Krashen. They all stressed the importance of doing and experiencing as a transformational process in the learning equation. For Nunan, ‘Developing some

degree of autonomy is essential if learners are to become effective language users, and the ability to direct one’s own learning can be developed through pedagogical procedures.’ Professor Nunan also explained why ongoing curriculum renewal is imperative for the globalized 21st century with its constantly changing demographics and technological developments: the nature, direction and aims of education must be redefined by each successive generation to help increase the understanding of humankind and the nature of learning. In brief, educators can best foster autonomous reflective learning by providing experiential learning and creating learning opportunities that provide concrete experiences that promote learner independence and social awareness.

Using Reflective Strategies to Encourage Student Engagement

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Qatar University's Foundation Program held its 2nd virtual event, *Academic Excellence Week*, on 7th and 8th December, 2020, where guest speakers presented workshops on a range of topics which may aid faculty in enhancing their teaching and students' learning.

One presentation, *Opportunities and Techniques for Increasing Student Engagement and Learning*, by Dr. Dudley Reynolds of Carnegie Mellon University Qatar, offered participants a chance to evaluate and discuss techniques for increasing student engagement with their learning. Techniques mentioned included learning objectives related to metalanguage, class exit tickets, and reflective portfolios.

One of the central tenets of Dr. Reynold's presentation is that students' engagement in their learning is crucial because when students are engaged, more knowledge is transferred or created. However, Dr. Reynolds asked the audience to think about the concept of engagement. Teachers should ask themselves, 'what indicates to you that students are engaged in their learning?' 'Why is student engagement in

their learning important?' 'How do you facilitate students' engagement in their learning?'

On this last point, Dr. Reynolds offered up three reflective strategies to encourage students' engagement in their learning, using examples from a first-year university writing course at Carnegie Mellon Qatar.

The first of these strategies is the idea of metalanguage, building vocabulary by getting students to talk about their goals and learning. This can be achieved in different domains (e.g., writing, reading, etc.) and by students being able to show what they can do as a result of the course, or what they can explain about their learning as a result of the course.

Dr. Reynold's second technique is to give students the opportunity to have regular reflection time by the use of a weekly exit ticket/class reflection, requiring an immediate response from students. One method used by Dr. Reynolds to facilitate this format is the use of Google Forms to ask students questions such as, 'what is something you understand better after today's



Dr. Dudley Reynolds: Photograph courtesy of Dudley Reynolds

class?' and 'What questions do you have after today's class?'

The third strategy, reflective portfolios, is to have students to do a global reflection on the course as a whole. Here, students reflect on course content, course goals, and their achievements and progression in particular learning out-

comes.

Dr. Reynolds was extremely positive about the use of these reflective strategies from his own experience; perhaps they are something that other teachers may benefit from in their own teaching.

Bi-Annual Fall 2020 Entrepreneurial Presentations Competition

Conan Kmiecik, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

For the past several years, teams of students in English for Communication II Business (ENGL 252), have presented their business ideas during a **showcase event**. Late in the Fall and Spring semesters, hundreds of students, male and female in separate wings of the Business and Economics Building (H08), set up elaborate poster displays and inform the event's audience about new business ideas for the Qatari market.

This event is the penultimate assessment in the multi-step, project-based Entrepreneurship Project, which itself aims to develop the students' Business English abilities, allow them to apply their knowledge from business college coursework, and expose them to the value of entrepreneurship.

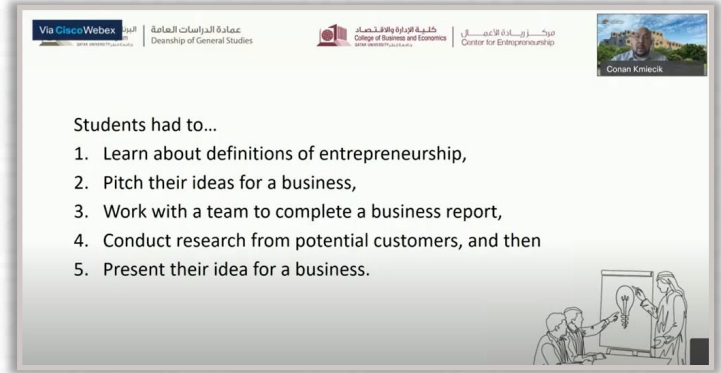
During Fall 2019, the first Entrepreneurial Presentations Competition was conducted in-person, with three teams of

female ENGL 252 students. This event was organized by Mhammed Chadi and Ben Kohler, the former Course Lead of ENGL 252. The aim was to provide the student teams with the best business ideas an additional opportunity to present their idea to a panel of experts, instead of a general audience. Additionally, this event provides students with the motivation to develop their business outside of the Qatar University (QU) classroom and campus.

However, with the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the idea of hundreds of people gathering in one room suddenly became hazardous.

On the 16th November 2020, the ENGL 252 team organized a virtual Entrepreneurial Presentations Competition.

This event was spearheaded by ENGL 252 instructor Mhammed Chadi and moderated by Course Lead, Conan



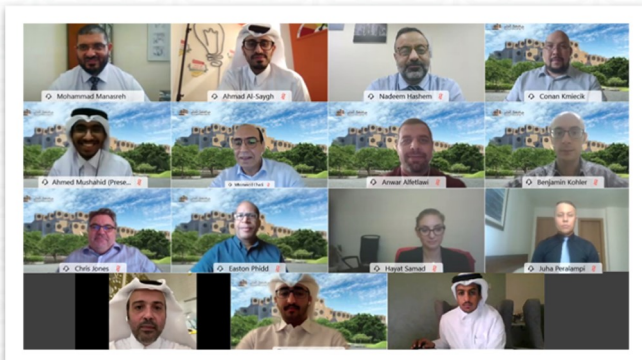
Explanation of the steps involved in the ENGL 252 Entrepreneurship Project: Visual courtesy of Sara Salmeh

Kmiecik. The event represented a collaboration between Qatar University's Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), the Qatar University College of Business and Economics, and the Bedaya Center for Entrepreneurship and Career Development.

During the Fall 2020 competition, four teams of male students from ENGL 252 virtually presented their business ideas through the WebEx video conferencing platform. Students were judged by a panel of three judges which included: Juha Perälampi, the Manager of the Business Incubator, Center for Entrepreneurship, at Qatar University; Ahmad Al-Saygh, the Entrepreneurship Manager at Bedaya Center; and Hamad Al Hajri, the CEO and founder of Snoonu, one of the fastest growing e-commerce platforms in Qatar.

online participation, there were some technical issues at the beginning of the event. However, once these issues were resolved, viewers of the event on WebEx and YouTube were impressed by the quality of the student presentations and the interactions with the panel of expert judges. As Ahmed Rahman, a student on the winning team, said at the end of the event, "I want to thank my teachers for this great opportunity. They have given us the chance to join this competition and talk to all about our company. We wish our company success in the future."

Although the future of course delivery at QU is uncertain, the ENGL 252 team is ready to conduct the outstanding Entrepreneurial Presentations Competition, in-person or online.



A selection of the panelist and participants during the Fall 2020 event: Screenshot courtesy of Conan Kmiecik

Like many events that had to transition from in-person to

International Tutor Certificate Training

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

In November 2020, 20 members of the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) and the Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM) participated in an International Tutor Certificate (ITC) online training course. This training was provided by the Centre for International Advanced and Professional Studies (CIAPS) with input from Eastern Cambridge Planning Study (ECAPS) Cambridge. The training sessions were given by Anthony Kila, a professor of Strategy and Development and the Centre Director at CIAPS.

The sessions focused on developing tutoring strategies. This included comparing the roles of students and tutors and understanding the role of professional tutoring today.

The content of the training sessions focused on strategies for acquiring subject knowledge for tutors, as well as how to analyze student profiles, and student learning styles. The training sessions also dealt with diagnosing student needs, accommodating the variety of student types and learning styles, developing constructive feedback techniques, and understanding the code of ethics for professional tutors.

The training sessions included open discussions between groups about different subjects. These discussions offered an opportunity for participants to network, and also gave participants the chance to share their experiences with top practitioners and academics from across the globe.

Sharing knowledge about the educational environment and personal experiences helped the session participants to reflect on their professional practice.

Mr. Ahmed Abdelaziz, an FPDM Teaching Assistant, said, "Let students feel that they can do it, and never give up. Getting things wrong usually equates to failure but doing so also promotes learning."

The Lead of English Foundation Program Success Zone, Ms. Raghda Abu Salah, said, "The training program was extremely valuable as it demonstrated strategies for supportive education and encouraged useful exchanges of ideas via the discussions whilst stimulating reflective thinking about my own profes-

sional development as a tutor. This opportunity for enhancing my professional development has resulted in a better mastery of skills and a more effective and purposeful practice with my learners. Furthermore, it has created more motivation and has developed new initiatives for promoting student achievement at Qatar University."

Overall, the course was very effective and presented numerous innovative ideas that students can apply in the Foundation Program (FP). Course participants were given an opportunity to develop their teaching styles and reflect on how they deal with each individual student in tutorials.



Visual courtesy of Pixabay

Concept Checking in the Digital Classroom

Tiffany Tillman, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Even in the physical classroom, checking students' understanding of the lesson can be a challenge. However, in an online classroom in which instruction relies heavily on a chat box and an oft-times difficult audio connection, that challenge is amplified. So, what is an easy and effective approach to measure whether students have understood the lesson or not? It turns out, using familiar applications to gather responses to well-structured concept checking questions (CCQs) work well. Below are a few suggestions for creating and implementing successful CCQs that not only gather synchronistic information, but also act as a tool

to inform future classes.

Plan CCQs in advance

Take a moment to look over your lesson plan and write CCQs for the day's objective/s. A thoughtfully crafted and implemented CCQ will not take long, but it can provide the teacher with a tool to see exactly what the students are struggling with, proving to be an invaluable tool in future lesson planning.

Keep it simple

Make sure the CCQs are drafted with the students' proficiency level in mind. Avoid using new and complex vocabulary or syntax. Using familiar language will better al-

low students to 'show what they know'.

Mix it up

While there is a place for yes/no questions, these will not provide a wealth of insight into the students' comprehension. Using multiple choice and short-answer, open-response questions will gather much more information and will allow the students another opportunity to engage with the language.

Use what you know

Using electronic forms that you are familiar with to gather CCQ responses provides the instructor with a convenient method to compile compre-

hension information. Socrative's 'exit ticket', Google Forms or Padlet or even the chat box are a few examples with which most all of us are familiar. When used while transitioning between lessons, it frees up the instructor to organize for the next part of the lesson and gives students another experience working with the language.

Mine the data in and out of class

Whether you choose to have students respond to a survey, in the chat box or by filling out an 'exit ticket', you'll be mining information that can be viewed either in or out of class. Choosing a platform or application that generates a report gives the option of viewing the results after class, and can inform how you will differentiate instruction or form breakout groups in future classes. In-class checking allows us to see if something needs addressing immediately.

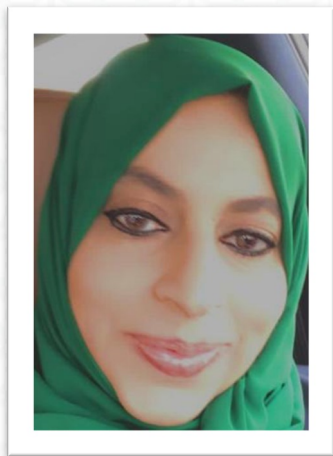
Taking a few moments to plan, keeping questions simple, varying question types, using familiar technology and mining the data to improve future lesson plans are some of the ways to easily and fruitfully utilize CCQs for teacher and student.



Visual courtesy of Pixabay

Faculty Focus: Shamsa Alrushaidi – First Khaleeji Instructor in FPDE

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program



Shamsa Alrushaidi: Photograph courtesy of Shamsa Alrushaidi

Interviewer: Please tell me about yourself.

Mrs Alrushaidi: I am from Suwaiq, a small town in the north of the Sultanate of Oman, not far from Sohar where my father established the first primary school. He was a poet as well as an imam, and from him I developed a love of language. Early on, I had an affinity for the English language and knew at a young age that I wanted to teach English. I felt I had a vocation. While still a teenager, I ran English classes from home for my siblings and cousins. It was not easy to convince my father to let me become a teacher as, in those days, teacher-trainers were mainly men, so I would be taught by men at the teacher's college. However, realizing I had a passion for teaching, my father eventually relented. This

paved the way for my sisters to continue their education. I am now married to an educator, and we have five children.

Interviewer: Let's talk about your teaching career.

Mrs Alrushaidi: I have been teaching for a long time. I was trained at the Oman College of Education as an elementary school teacher and received my teaching diploma in 1992. I returned to my old primary school to start my career as an English language teacher. Later, I decided to continue my education and in 2003 I got my Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) from the University of Leeds. I became a senior-teacher in a preparatory school, and was appointed as the first teacher-trainer in Oman to run In-Service Education and Training (INSET) courses for English teachers. From 2004 to 2009 I was an English language teacher-trainer for the Ministry of Education in Sohar. During that time, I did my Master of Arts (M.A.) in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at the University of Leeds. Then in 2010, I joined the Ministry of Higher Education, College of Applied Sciences in Sohar, and became an English language instructor to college students. In 2015, I was appointed Head of the English Department, a very demanding job. I also did

an International Diploma in Teaching Language Management (IDTLM) at Cambridge University. I started annual English-language Open Day in Omani schools. I also launched an Outreach program for school teachers to share their experiences and participate in training workshops.

Interviewer: Impressive. When did you start teaching at Qatar University?

Mrs Alrushaidi: I joined Qatar University's Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) in August, 2017. For some time, my husband and I had been thinking about teaching abroad in order to broaden our experience and give our children exposure to another culture. My husband encouraged me to apply to Qatar University (QU), so in March 2016, I had an interview and was offered a position. I took early retirement from the Omani Ministry of Higher Education after twenty-five years of service. It was a big gamble for both of us.

Interviewer: Was coming here worth the gamble?

Mrs Alrushaidi: Of course. It was a good decision for both my husband and myself. Teaching here has been challenging and is a very different experience from teacher train-

ing in Oman. I having been teaching in the Embedded program, which I really enjoy. I love the cultural diversity of the FPDE which has given me the opportunity to meet instructors, as well as students, from many different countries. I enjoy working with them and love the support that everyone gives to each other. It has truly been an eye-opening experience to work here.

Interviewer: What have been your best moments at the FPDE thus far?

Mrs Alrushaidi: Well, there have been many of those. Aside from teaching, I really enjoy socializing with my colleagues. When I first came, I noticed that teachers here were so busy that they didn't have much time to get to know each other so I decided to organize bi-weekly brunches open to everyone. These have proved very popular. In addition, on 18th November 2018 and 2019 I held an Oman National Day Event to acquaint my colleagues and Foundation Program (FP) staff with my beloved homeland. Hopefully, I will be able to celebrate the 2021 Oman National Day with colleagues once again.

Interviewer: It's been a pleasure to talk to you, Shamsa. Thank you for sharing your memories.

Faculty Focus: Kashif Raza, Faculty Senate Member

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Interviewer: Tell me about yourself.

Mr. Raza: I am from the city of Sargodha, in the citrus-growing region of Punjab, in Pakistan. I speak several languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, English and some Arabic.

Interviewer: Let's talk about your studies.

Mr. Raza: I did my first Master of Arts (M.A.) in English Language and Literature at the University of Sargodha. I then studied law at the University of Punjab and returned to Sargodha where I worked as a lawyer for two years. In 2011, I went to the United States to do an M.A. in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at Oklahoma City University.

Interviewer: Why did you become a TESOL teacher?

Mr. Raza: Well, law was an

interest but never really a profession for me. I rarely enjoyed the routine of going to court every day and reading piles of files. While I was studying English Language and Literature, I had also worked part-time as a teaching assistant for six months. I enjoyed this experience very much and, after working as a lawyer, I opted for a career change and decided to pursue higher studies in TESOL. I still enjoy law and have developed an interest in legal English.

Interviewer: When did you join to Qatar University?

Mr. Raza: In Spring 2013, I was interviewed by Chris Jones, Dr. Mohammed Al Nuaimi, Geoffrey Miller, and Berta Hussar at the TESOL International Convention in Dallas and was promptly offered a job, so I arrived in Qatar in August 2013. My first

courses were in the Foundation Program (FP) where I taught Writing Workshop, Reading Workshop, and Integrated Core for three semesters.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy teaching these courses?

Mr. Raza: Very much so. However, in Fall 2015, I was assigned to teach in the Embedded sub-program where I taught English for Communication I (ENGL 250). Then I was asked to work with Carmen Denekamp, who was the ENGL 250 course coordinator at the time, and helped her develop English Communication for Law (ENGL 253) syllabi as the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) had decided to offer English for Specific Purposes (ESP) sections in Business and Law, in addition to general English. We designed the new

ENGL253 for Law syllabus; my previous experience as a lawyer was very useful for this. I also taught the first ENGL253 for Law courses which I really enjoyed as I was able to use aspects of my legal background in the classroom.

Interviewer: How were you able to do that?

Mr. Raza: I wanted to introduce authenticity to the classroom, so I asked my students to choose a focus of interest, civil law or criminal law. I then chose films based on two types of typical court cases, civil and criminal. Students watched their assigned film and then did a classroom re-enactment of the court cases. They really enjoyed this role-play activity, which enabled them to understand how what they were learning in class could be applied to real-life situations. I think it is important that teachers be able to modify an existing syllabus to better serve their students' needs and interests. It helps engage the students more and makes the learning experience more interesting and real for them. It was an extremely positive experience for both myself and the students.

Interviewer: Did you also teach general English Embedded courses?



Mr. Raza's presentation at the ENRICH convention in Italy: Visual courtesy of Kashif Raza

Mr. Raza: Yes. I have been teaching English for Communication II (ENGL 251) course for the last two years. In order to enhance student motivation and create a connection between their previous experience and target language, I try to add a local element to my lessons. For example, this semester, I gave students an assignment to interview an elderly family member, usually a grandparent, and ask them questions about family relationships and family values in the digital age. Naturally, the interviews were conducted in Arabic, but the students had to translate the questions and responses and then report on their interview results in English. They really enjoyed this assignment and the opportunity it gave them to learn something about their senior family members' viewpoints. I think assignments of this nature help engage students much more in language learning than some less pertinent topics as something like this is culturally relevant.

Interviewer: I understand you also do language research and have published a number of papers.

Mr. Raza: Yes, I got into the research field about five years ago. Doing classroom activities like the ones I mentioned stimulated my curiosity about perceptions and expectations in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. I decided to investigate what teachers and students actually

expect from one another, what they expect from the program, and what they expect from the university. Doing such action-research studies helps teachers and programs to modify syllabi and materials to better suit student needs. In fact, the results of my studies were presented at the TESOL International Convention in Maryland in 2016. My first published article was in 2018, *Adapting Teaching Strategies to Arab Student Needs in an EFL Classroom*; it was published by a SCOPUS indexed journal called *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*. The article discusses some of the misconceptions about Arab students and proposes a teaching adaptation model that has worked really well in my classes. Realizing the scarcity of research on Qatari students learning English, I continued exploring faculty-student expectations and have published three papers so far that report on expectations about responsibilities in the class and type of feedback on students' writing tasks

Interviewer: You also do collaborative research?

Mr. Raza: I do. Recently, I translated into Urdu a research report authored by Dr. Dudley Reynolds of Carnegie-Mellon University, Qatar. He is a past TESOL International President and writes extensively about language issues in globalized contexts. The report, *Language Policy in Globalized Contexts* was published by

WISE (World Innovation Summit for Education) and my translation was also published by them. Dudley and I had an online session on this report last spring. I have also been working with Dr. Christine Coombe on a number of projects; most recently, I co-authored a paper with her titled, *Teacher Effectiveness in the Gulf*. You can read the full article on the website of *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*. We hope to publish more articles in the near future.

Interviewer: You also represent the FPDE as their Faculty Senate Member.

Mr. Raza: Yes, I was voted in as a Faculty Senate Member in 2018 by the FPDE faculty. The position is held for two years. However, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, current Faculty Senate Members have had their position extended until further notice.

Interviewer: What do you do in this regard?

Mr. Raza: My main role is to listen to people's concerns about various issues such as workload, scheduling, health insurance, and educational allowances. I then raise such concerns at Senate meetings. With regard to the workload issue, I made a request in 2019 to reduce the lecturer teaching workload from 36 hours to 30 hours as it had been prior to 2004. This proposal was actually approved by the Senate and was then

sent for approval to the higher administration for consideration. However, nothing to date has been ratified. I also made an official request to the Senate to provide more support to the FPDE faculty who wish to pursue research projects. This included reducing their course load and providing financial support. I pointed out that such research helps improve the status of the university as well as gives instructors an opportunity to provide valid action-research data to help improve curricula and teaching practices. This proposal is still under consideration.

Interviewer: I believe you also provide support to the FPDE teachers who wish to get university approval to do research at QU.

Mr. Raza: Yes, this is outside my role as Faculty Senator or teacher. I have helped a number of colleagues to complete their application forms and documents in addition to giving sessions on the process of IRB (Internal Review Board) approval. I have worked closely with Dr. Manasreh, the Head of Department, to support these applicants. Most of them have already received approval.

Interviewer: Well done! Thank you for your outstanding community service and for sharing your teaching and research experiences.

Remembering Bob: 1958 – 2018

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The 25th of February 2021 will mark the third anniversary of the passing of Robert Kennedy, the Head of the Foundation English Department (FPDE) for six years, from the fall of 2006 to the spring of 2012. Robert Kennedy was a very private, shy, and retiring person, but to those who knew him, he could be frank, supportive, hardworking, and generous. Bob joined the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) in September 1986 and was one of the first American instructors employed by Qatar University. Soon after his arri-

val, he helped organize the very first Symposium, Problems in Reading for Arabic-Speaking Students, held by Qatar University in March 1987.

Bob stayed at Qatar University (QU) until 1991 when he returned to Papua New Guinea to help run a language school. Missing Qatar and the ELTU, he returned in the spring of 1994 and started teaching in the English for Business and Economics program. He again left Qatar in June 1999 for the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

However, by January 2000, he was back to teaching Business English in the ELTU.

A few years later, in the autumn of 2004, the three Foundation programs, English, Mathematics and Computer Training were inaugurated. In the fall of 2006, Bob was appointed Head of the English Department. Many things were accomplished under his leadership. A staunch advocate of technology, Bob encouraged everyone to explore its potential. During his tenure as Head of Department (HoD), the pro-

gram changed several times, but the transition was always smooth and seamless. Reserved yet forthright when he needed to be, Bob ran a tight foundation ship and encouraged his crew to give their best.

Bob stepped down as HoD in 2012, after six years of dedicated service. He continued in the department as an instructor. He was quite happy to return to teaching and remained a committed instructor, colleague and friend, always ready to offer advice, mentoring, and help to anyone who asked.

To the sorrow of many, Bob Kennedy, our respected, pragmatic and hardworking former Head of Department, colleague, friend, and mentor passed away on 25th February 2018. For close to half his life, Bob had lived in Qatar; he was much attached to this desert land, its people, his students, his colleagues and Qatar University. Bob left his mark in the hearts and minds of those who knew him best.



Stephanie Pinnacle, Bob Kennedy, a visitor from Georgetown University, Dr. Khalid Al Ali, a visitor from Georgetown University, Dr. Mohammed Fawzi: Photograph taken in 2011 and courtesy of David Coupland

Student Focus - Alanoud Al-Maahdeed: Experiences of an Online Learner

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Interviewer: Please tell me something about yourself.

Alanoud: I am a Qatari and a recent graduate of Aisha Bint Abu Bakr Girls Secondary School in Al Rayyan. I took six required high school subjects: English, Arabic, social studies, Islamic studies, physics, and math. I was a top student and graduated with 97.7% last June. I registered at Qatar University because I want to specialize in Industrial Engineering.

Interviewer: Well done. Tell me about your online learning experiences during your last high school term.

Alanoud: It was a difficult period. We had no assigned classes apart from math and physics. Our math teacher was excellent;

she held online classes every day to discuss our math problems and give us solutions. The Physics teacher held one class a week, so we could ask her questions about our assignments. She was very helpful. The rest of the courses required us to do daily homework assignments which we would send to the teacher. We also had to watch a lot of videos. We had so many worksheets to complete each day. If we didn't send the worksheet by the 4 o'clock deadline, the teacher would call our parents and inform them. This caused a lot of problems for students. We kept in touch with teachers through WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, and by email.

Interviewer: Did you get feedback for your worksheets?

Alanoud: Not really, apart from the math and physics teachers. Both were very helpful and supportive. A lot of worksheet tasks for some classes were not very useful, we just had to learn facts. In our English class, we mainly watched boring grammar videos. Learning online was really difficult because for most of the classes there was very little direct interaction with the teachers.

Interviewer: Were there any advantages?

Alanoud: Yes, I learned to be a more independent learner and rely on myself. This was very useful and helped me prepare for my university classes, but a lot of students found online learning difficult and didn't do much.

Interviewer: Let's talk about your online experiences in the Foundation Program (FP).

Alanoud: I was admitted to FP level 2 classes in Fall 2020. I had to take Reading Workshop Intermediate (R002), Writing Workshop Intermediate (W002), and Integrated Core Intermediate (C002). My distance learning experience in the FP was very different. There was a lot of direct interaction with my teachers who worked very hard to help us. I enjoyed my writing class with Miss Nisreen; she was really great. My favorite essay was the compare/contrast essay about online learning and face-to-face learning. I supported face-to-face learning because it is much easier for students; they can talk directly to the teacher and understand things from her body language or facial expressions. I also enjoyed my reading classes with Mrs. Nicole who is a wonderful teacher. We did a lot of online activities in her class like Kahoot. I think my reading and writing skills improved



Results of C002 questionnaire: Visual courtesy of Alanoud Al-Maahdeed

a lot because of these two courses. I liked the reading course book; my favorite text was in Reading Explorer 4. I was really interested in an article called *How Safe is Our Food* and the one about biotech foods. This is because they related

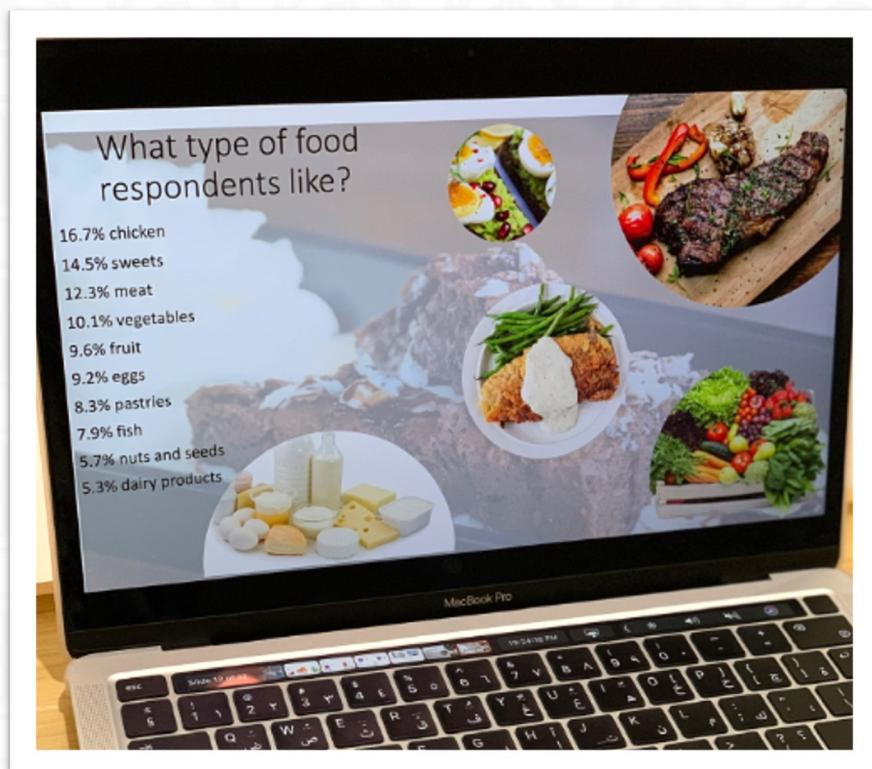
to my C002 project topic, *Eating Habits*.

Interviewer: Tell me about your Integrated Core Intermediate (C002) course.

Alanoud: This was the most difficult course because we had to do a lot of

things. It was also the class where I learned a lot of new things like document management, document labelling, writing a questionnaire, reporting survey data and statistics, and writing a report. The class also helped me develop my critical thinking skills because the teacher asked us to write our opinions about course topics in blogs and do reflections about our project. From doing the project I learnt a lot about people's eating habits in Qatar. For example, I found out people don't know much about healthy eating; actually some respondents were surprised to see how many times they snacked daily. I think my survey made my respondents think more about their eating habits. The course book was also very interesting and the teacher, Mrs. Elisabeth, showed us a lot of videos which related to Qatari or Khaleeji culture. One really interesting video was about Hurricane Gonu which caused so much damage in Oman. I didn't know about this.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Alanoud. Best of luck with your Post-foundation classes.



Results of C002 questionnaire: Visual courtesy of Alanoud Al-Maahdeed

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Photograph courtesy of David Bartsch