QATAR UNIVERSITY
جامعة قطر

The Asian Games Torch at the University

Foundation Program

The English Department
Newsletter
Issue No. 5 - Fall Semester 2006

Knowledge that is known only to a few can be used only by a few.
A piece of information that is shared can go a long way.

Foundation Programme Unit - II
وحدة البرنامج التأسيسي II

The Foundation Program Faculty and Staff Volunteering in the Asian Games

Foundation Program

The English Department Newsletter
Issue No. 5 - Fall 2006

{Knowledge that is known only to a few can be used only by a few}
(Gloria Steinem - Issues Across the Curriculum, 1997)

{A piece of information that is shared can go a long way} bbc.com

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

Prelude

It always takes longer to get things done than you think because you never know exactly what's going to happen. The longer you do something, the more you realize how difficult it is to do it properly, so the harder you should try. No matter how you get a foot in the door, you have to be good enough every time to keep up the good work. Our experience producing the Newsletter has taught us to be patient and to multi-task; you might have to juggle a lot of different balls at the same time. It is always important to have understanding partners. I'm glad that Mary accepted to continue working on the Newsletter despite her demanding duties as level supervisor, and that Eileen returned midway through the semester.

Meeting Deadlines

Naturally, the Newsletter needs new batteries every time. At first, this time round, there was a shortage of contributions, to the extent that we had to try to find the needle in the haystack. We were forced willy-nilly to accept the situation and be patient. It's obviously conceivable that the survival and continuity of the Newsletter depends on the individual and collective contributions of our colleagues. Pressures and time constraints of our profession can get on top of us all, but these, unfortunately, are likely to negatively affect us, editors of the Newsletter, as well. Not meeting deadlines would result in a lot of pressure on us, and in delays in production. However, we eventually hit good luck when we decided that personal communication is the best of all ideas to reach our colleagues for contributions. Our worries literally evaporated in the first instance we started to get material. At first, the beam was weak and yellow, then there was full sunshine; contributions started to come in, but well after the deadline. In the future, please meet deadlines and submit according to our specifications, which we always state in our memo for each issue. We hope it doesn't turn out to be a kind of timeless newsletter. And long may our Newsletter survive and reign.

Key Events

What an eventful semester!

The University and the Foundation English Program have experienced many key events this semester and it is appropriate to document two of these major events in this issue: the cream of the crab was the arrival of the Asian Games Torch at the University, and the three-day workshop conducted by the Commission on English Language Programs Accreditation (CEA), the American accrediting organization.

The Torch at the University

The university was honoured with the arrival of the Asian Games Torch on Wednesday, 29 November, 2006. The procession of pride and joy, led by H.H. Sheikh Jo'an bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Honourary Ambassador for the Torch, and Her Excellency the President of the University, Professor Sheikha bint Abdulla Al-Misnad, moved along the main streets of the University, which were decorated with Qatari banners, and lined by senior administrators, deans of colleges, heads of departments, faculty, staff, and the entire student population in both campuses. And it is worth mentioning here that we feel proud of the University faculty and staff in general, and our colleagues in the Foundation Program in particular for the significant role they played in the Asian Games, volunteering their time, efforts and skills in various aspects of the event. (See the cover and inside pages).

Visit from CEA Experts

In September, 2006, the Foundation Program hosted a visit from the Commission on English Language Programs Accreditation (CEA). The purpose of the visit was to present an orientation to inform English Program faculty of the accreditation process, and to give hands-on instruction to the Accreditation Steering Committee. (See page 4). Now the Department has embarked on an 18-month self-study, after which final reports should be submitted as a result of this study.

Acknowledgement

As always, my colleagues on the Editorial Board have been a constant source of inspiration, support and encouragement. My debt to them is implicit in the many sections prepared, but I want to make explicit my gratitude to them all. I should particularly like to thank Mary Lanaghan, the vice-editor, who worked tirelessly and with great kindness to help me from the very planning stages, throughout the editing process, to doing the final proofreading, and for making it at times to the printing press. I also express my gratitude to Eileen Plumb who devoted time and effort to prepare the Student Writing Section and the Asian Games Section. Thanks to Aladdin Halwani, who as usual, meticulously and accurately collected and prepared the Department's news and events, with the expertise of the computer person. Thanks to Allyson Young and Elizabeth Szewczyk for contributing significantly to this issue. Thanks to Anthony Heron for taking on the enormous task of proofreading most of the material. Thanks to our students who contributed brilliant pieces of writing, especially Lubna Hamdan, who contributed to the previous issue and to this issue as well.

Our colleagues who provided photos have been no less supportive: Mustafa Omira, the University photographer, and Bino Sarah Paul, Elizabeth Szewczyk, Allyson Young, Zain Al Moumen, and our colleagues who volunteered in the Asian Games. Thanks to them all.

I hope all our readers will find the end result an enjoyable read. As ever, all suggestions for improvement will be most welcome. Have a nice mid-term vacation.

Abdul Moniem

The President's Report on the Latest
Developments in the QU Reform Project

Project's Achievements, Challenges and Future Plans

Introduction

Following the approval of the reform project plan by H.H. the Emir in the summer of 2004, the University began to implement the said reform by identifying the human, legal, administrative, and financial resources needed to carry it out successfully. This report covers the activities and accomplishments that have been achieved subsequent to that date, in addition to the activities that need to be accomplished in the coming academic year (2006/2007).

The structure of the reform project followed during the past two years created dynamic synergy between Rand Corporation and the University in which the efforts and talents of both parties complemented each other. Indeed, the sum of the reform project was greater than the sum of its individual components. Furthermore, the University recruited numerous financial, academic, and administrative consultants to ensure that the projected plans are implemented correctly.

The activities in this report will be organized chronologically, beginning with the academic year 2004/2005 and ending with the projected activities for the coming academic year 2006/2007. Each of the three successive academic years covered is identified by the themes: "Building Structures," "Promoting Culture of Quality," and "Reforming the Heart and Soul of the University."

Building Structures (2004/2005)

The approval of the reform plan in the summer of 2004 culminated in an Emir Decree (Number 34) that transformed the University into a government-funded autonomous institution governed by a Board of Regents. Subsequently, the University accelerated the process of drawing up academic bylaws for itself and its newly established Board of Regents. Drafts of these bylaws were drawn up by the University's Academic Bylaws Committee and were then scrutinized by the University Project Staff, prior to submission to the Rand Staff for fine tuning and approved by the Board of Regents by June 2005.

In order to meet the challenge of managing its own financial affairs, the University solicited the assistance of a leading financial and business consulting firm to establish sound policies and procedures to govern its financial, administrative, and business operations to obtain the Board of Regents approval by April 2005. In conjunction with this step, the University invested a large budget to put in place the IT infrastructure and systems, which will support the newly created policies, procedures, and financial operations. Employees were trained in using the new Oracle System prior to its launching.

The entire academic structure of the University was reorganized to make it more amenable to decentralization. Much of the decision-making process was devoted to the colleges and departments by eliminating the cumbersome tiered system of decision-making councils existing prior to the reform project.

The University now relies on its administrative staff (Department Heads and Deans) and advisory bodies (e.g., EMC, Academic Council) to carry on its academic functions. The College of Humanities and the College of Sciences were merged into one structure (College of Arts and Sciences). The program in Law was removed from the College of Sharia and upgraded into the College of Law, and programs were realigned to make new structures (e.g., Social Sciences Department). In order to support these significant academic reorganizations, the University established new offices to oversee such functions as institutional planning and

research, instruction and faculty development, and faculty evaluation.

Analysis of the University's need in terms of manpower revealed that it had to redefine this need, especially in the non-academic realm. Based on the analysis, the University drew up and implemented a strategy to deal with the over-employment it suffered.

Promoting Culture of Quality (2005/2006)

Prior to the initiation of the official reform project, the University took unprecedented steps to ensure that it graduates competent students. It raised, for example, the graduation GPA requirement from 1.65 to 2.00 in line with most well-established universities. Furthermore, it tightened up the probation rules while giving the student a fair chance to improve his/her GPA. Furthermore, University graduation requirements were reduced for the academic programs to 120 semester credit hours divided amongst general requirements (34 credit hours) major requirements (42 – 51 credit hours), minor requirements (24 credit hours) and free electives (11 – 20 credit hours). All academic programs started the process of accreditation or other forms of quality assurance.

The University recognizes that the backbone of its effort to produce quality graduates rests primarily on the quality of its faculty. Hence, the University made a conscious effort to modify its recruitment strategy and requirements in order to attract qualified faculty. For example, departments were requested to diversify their faculty in terms of nationalities and universities they graduated from. Furthermore, the University made it a policy to target faculty who are proficient in English and computer skills, recognizing that, while most of its existing faculty members are highly qualified in terms of content in their field of study, many lack the pedagogical skills to transfer this knowledge effectively to their students.

Hence, the University embarked on an ambitious strategy to develop the quality of its faculty by encouraging them to attend training workshops, conferences, and providing them with research opportunities and funds. As an incentive for self improvement and development, the University based the amount of annual increment a faculty member receives on the results of his/her performance appraisal. In general, the University pursued a policy to recognize achievement and encourage new initiatives.

Reforming the Heart and Soul of the University (2006/2007)

The intensive effort and energy the University

community expended on the academic planning exercise during the academic year 2005/2006 has shed light on its strengths, weaknesses, and the direction it should take in order to achieve its aspiration of becoming a model university within the region based on a student-centered approach. Although we do not underestimate the achievements the University has made within the past 2-3 years, we believe them to be prerequisites and necessary but not sufficient conditions to achieve our goals. We consider the implementation of the academic plans formulated by the University community to be at the crux of the reform project. However, we recognize that the successful implementation of our academic planning is contingent on:

(a) a qualified and competent faculty that takes ownership of the plans it is implementing;

(b) a leadership, especially at the departmental and college levels, that can combine energy, creativity, initiative, transparency, and devotion with responsibility, leadership, and accountability;

(c) an environment that encourages and fosters initiative, creativity, and excellence.

Consequently, the University will persist tirelessly to create the conditions that will ensure the realization not only of the academic plans; but, also, will install the mechanisms that will ensure its continuity. We will pursue, but not limit ourselves to, the following actions and policies for 2006/2007 and beyond:

(a) commitment to the utilization of better pedagogy in the classroom. We hope to accomplish this by adhering to our policy of recruiting highly qualified faculty as stated previously. By the same token, the University will encourage faculty whose performance appraisal shows weaknesses, to undertake training workshops to remedy the weakness. Continuous professional development of our faculty shall be the motto of the future;

(b) build departmental and collegiate leadership through training, recruitment, and mentoring/coaching. Senior administration will encourage departmental and collegiate leaders to replicate this process by building their own teams. It is hoped that this process will reinforce the concept of taking ownership of the units under their supervision;

(c) take advantage of the intensive learning experience of the previous two years in order to build a university environment and community that is conducive to the realization of our plans.

QU FOUNDATION PROGRAM HOSTS CEA EXPERTS

[From The Peninsula]

Qatar University's Foundation English Program hosted a visit in September, 2006 from the **Commission on English Language Programs Accreditation** (CEA), the American accrediting organization specializing in accrediting intensive English language programs in colleges and universities.

Teresa O'Donnell, CEA Executive Director, and **Dr**

"student achievement," "facilities," and so on. It is intended to be a discovery process in which a program finds its strengths and weaknesses and to result in on-going improvement in the various standards areas. Multiple levels of input are required from administrators, faculty and students.

The purpose of CEA's visit was to present an orientation to inform the Foundation English Program faculty of the accreditation process and to give hands-on instruction to the **Accreditation Project Steering Committee.** This committee consists of seven faculty members who are responsible for planning and conducting the self-study and for drafting the final reports of the findings resulting from that process.

Mary Reeves, former Chair of the Commission and currently facilitating CEA workshops, presented a three-day customized CEA accreditation workshop to the Foundation English Program faculty and the program's Accreditation Project Steering Committee on September 17-19.

QU's Foundation English Program began the process of seeking accreditation by CEA in February 2006 by successfully passing CEA's eligibility review. Stages in the accreditation process include the eligibility review, the self-study, the site visit, and the accreditation review by the Commission. The self-study is the means by which a program evaluates its own performance in providing quality English language instruction to its students in relation to each of CEA's 52 Standards, which are divided into ten major areas such as "faculty,"

CEA's Standards are recognized by the US Department of Education and by English as a Second/Foreign Language professionals as representing the practices of the field. CEA-accredited programs enjoy worldwide professional and public recognition that their educational offerings and administrative practices have undergone intensive review against benchmarks set by the profession and have been judged to be among the best.

The Foundation Program, established over the summer of 2004, is described as the gateway to higher education and the cornerstone to academic success and excellence. The English Foundation Program aims at bridging the gap between school and college education and helping students improve their English communication skills.

English Department News and Events

Prepared by Aladdin Halwani

New Staff Orientation

The English Department headed by Robert Kennedy started its new academic year 2006-2007, with the following flurry of activities:

Aladdin

Activity	Date
* Department Head's Welcome	Sunday, 10 Sept.
* Department Administrative Team meet and greet	Wed. 13 Sept.
* Yahala (QU Orientation Program)	Thurs. 14 Sept.
* CEA Delegation faculty (All) Orientation	Sun. 17 Sept.
* Curriculum / Assessment Orientation	Mon. 18 Sept.
* Meet Level Supervisors/ Fellow Level Staff	Mon. 18 Sept.
* Meet Mentors for Campus Tour	Wed. 20 Sept.

Robert Kennedy

Head of the English Department

These activities were followed by a number of presentations:

* Aladdin Halwani gave two orientation sessions on Multimedia in the English Department to the new staff. The session included information training on the new multimedia program available.

* There were some short presentations on Thursday 19th Sept. based on empowering teachers and students during the first week of classes.

Presentation Title: Writing Portfolio Survival Kit
Presenter: Ahmed Selim

Ahmed

1. Presentation Title: Promoting Learner Independence
Presenter: Anita J. Ghajar-Selim

Anita

Presentation Title: A little Phonetics Will Do
Presenter: Khalid Mahmoud

Khalid

Congratulations

To Lulwa Al-Mansouri, the Foundation English Program Administrative Assistant, for winning the prize for the contest published in the previous issue.

Question: Where do you think the picture of Winston Churchill and the Chief-Editor was taken?

**Answer: At Madam Tussauds (The Wax Museum) in London.**

The prize is this best selling book, a thriller by Christopher Pike.

→ **Chief-Editor**
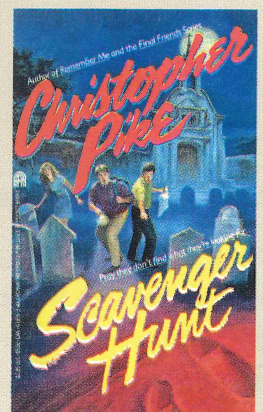
Dr. Kourosh Lachini

Dr. Kourosh, member of the academic staff in the English Department, has been appointed as Coordinator of the proposals vetting committee at the Qatar TESOL 2nd International Conference to be held at The College of the North Atlantic, Doha, Qatar on April 13-14, 2007 http://www.qatartesol.org/call.html. He has also been appointed as

Dr. Kourosh Lachini

Regional Representative of Qatar at the first English Language Teaching Global Congress headquartered in Pusan, South Korea.
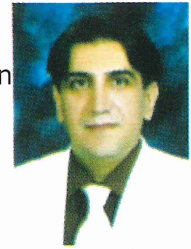
Some of his recent presentations are

1. **"Test Type Factor Clashes with the Accessiblity Hierarchy,"** November 16-17, 2006, presented at the 10th annual conference of CTELT (Current Trends in English Language Testing), organized by the SIG group of Testing of the TESOL Arabia at Dubai Men's College, Dubai, the UAE.

2. **"The Impact of Meta-discourse Markers Consciousness-raising on Writing Skill."** September 7-9, 2006, Research on Second and Foreign Language Acquisition and Teaching (DILTEC) Université of Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, France.

3. **"The Impact of Language Proficiency on Flouting Grice's Implicatures among EFLers,"** August 9-13, 2006, University of Turku, Turku, **Finland.**

Pursuing Accreditation

The English Department program began the process of pursuing accreditation from the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) in Spring 2006. Dr. Khalid Al Ali made it clear that after the successful completion of the first stage of the process, the eligibility review, we will now begin preparation for the Foundation English Program's 18-month self-study. Beginning in January 2007, the Accreditation Project Coordinator and six steering committee members will begin conducting the formal study by which our program will be evaluated. Faculty, staff, administrators and students will play an important role in gathering information for the project and comparing our program's current practices to CEA's 52 standards.

To this end, the Foundation English Program hosted Ms. Teresa O'Donnell, Executive Director of the Commission for English Language Program Accreditation, and Dr. Mary Reeves, Past Chair of the Commission, in a three-day series of workshops.

Evaluating Pilot Course 811201-1

Dr. M. Fawzi

Dr. Mohammad Fawzi

As part of the on going development policy undertaken by the Foundation Program, a committee was formed in the English Department, last year, to write a new syllabus for course 811201-1. The committee completed its job and the new syllabus was approved by the Core Curriculum Committee. Then a decision was made to pilot the new syllabus on six groups only. The course is being piloted now and towards the end of the semester it should be evaluated. The use of the new syllabus as an

alternative to the existing one depends on the results of the evaluation process.

The pilot course is designed to enable students achieve academic oral communication to the standard required at university level. It is a 3-hour per week course. The course integrates all the language skills but mainly concentrates on developing advanced academic listening and speaking skills. Students are trained to apply critical thinking skills to a wide range of challenging subjects from diverse academic disciplines. Course activities include listening to authentic English lectures in an academic setting, note-taking, acquiring advanced academic vocabulary, and group discussions. In addition, the course also includes other skills to consolidate major skills such as reading, interviewing, and writing. The course is mainly a workshop activity.

The process of evaluation will be supervised by the Core Curriculum Committee.

This committee is also responsible for developing and evaluating the syllabi for

Required University courses, including English 201-1 and English 202-1.

The evaluation process will include the following measures:

- Questionnaire to the course teachers

- Questionnaire to the students

- Exam results

- Class visits (by the head of the Core Curriculum Committee to the teachers involved in the process)

Teachers involved in the process of evaluation are: Dr. M. Fawzi, Mr. Aladdin Halwani and Dr. Hani Al Kuteifan.

**Foundation English Program Faculty at Shatter Abbas**

Sports News in the English Department

* Aladdin Halwani(left) from the English Department came second in the tennis tournament which was held on October 15th 2006.

* A table tennis tournament was held during Ramadan. The participants were Dr.Khalid Al Ali, Selim Al Salim, Khalid M. Ismail , and Mosa Jum'at. We came third in the game.

* A basketball tournament was held during Ramadan. Our team came second. The members of academic staff who participated in the tournament were Khalid M. Ismail, Ahmed Selim, Kambiz Qadam Khair, David Hess, Ritchard Whiteman, and Ridha Bin Rejeb.
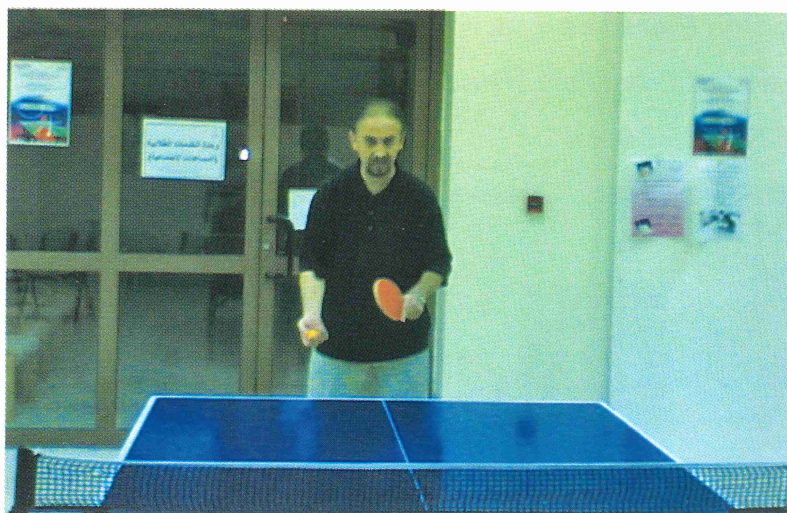
The English Department Multimedia Group

No sooner did the Multimedia Group form than it embarked on a series of activities aimed at promoting e-learning in the English Department.

* Blackboard Academic Suite, version 7.1 has efficiently been used by Joseph Harrison and Aladdin Halwani for the first time at Qatar University, and students in the Post-Foundation Courses enjoy the benefits of electronically receiving instructions, submitting assignments and actively taking part in discussion board forums.

James

Dinos

* An online writing course has been produced and successfully launched by Dinos Demetriades, member of the MM Group.

* A new faculty personal page making available valuable language learning skills and links has been published by James Fitzgibbon

Action Plan Project Group

The English Department is planning a professional development week in which a host of workshops will be given on February 4-8, 2007, according to the following schedule:

* Dr. Mohammed Abbas, MOE Bahrain (available Thurs, Feb 8th) Topic: Creating a collaborative English Department culture

* Panel of Texas A & M professors of education & education majors taught by Rula Momami in spring 2007, Topic: Impact of English training in the U of Q Foundation program on future teachers of Qatar (suggested)

* Dr. Zohreh Eslami, Texas A & M, will conduct a one-hour talk on what language proficiency future English teachers need.

* Sarah Al Kuwari &/or Aisha Al Kulaifi, Model School Operators, Topic:

Impact of model schools on English education in Qatar (suggestion)

* Linda Webster, Educational Consultant (home base UK)

Theme: *Impact on the Future of Qatar*

* Aladdin Halwani, Multi-Media Topic: Creating a Personal Web Page

Joe

* Joseph Harrison, Topic:

Blackboard Academic Suite

James

Mark

* James Fitzgibbon & Mark Hayne, Topic:

Web-logging and Useful Websites

Simone

* Dr. Simone Evans, Topic: Using

StoryBoard

* Kevin Rooney, Topic:

Hotpotatoes

Kevin

Dinos

Dinos, Topic: Flash macromedia

Ahmed Selim (right) with people with special needs in a basketball game

Foundation Program English Department
Administrative Structure
2006.2007

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┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────┐        ┌─────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
│ Administrative  │────────│ Department Head │────────│ Academic    │   │ University      │
│ Support Staff   │        │ Robert Kennedy  │        │ Board       │   │ Committee       │
└─────────────────┘        └─────────────────┘        └─────────────┘   │ Representatives │
                                                                         └─────────────────┘
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Coordinator – Administration /Faculty Support Ahmed F . Selim	Coordinator - Student Services Allyson Young	Coordinator – Curriculum Mu mu Winn	Coordinator – Testing Justin Richards	Coordinator – University Requirement and Adjunct Programs Dr. Mohammad Fawzi

Faculty Support /IT	PD	New Faculty Support / Mentors	SILC Group	Writing Center Group	Curriculum Group	MM/ Call Group	Test Writing Group	Test Evaluation / Test Bank Group	UR-PF	PG Diploma

UR-HUM

ConEd TOEFL

Other

L1 Supervisor Amr Salah	Level 1 Staff
L2 Supervisor Mary Lanaghan	Level 2 Staff
L3 Supervisor Salwa El Gammal	Level 3 Staff
L4 Supervisor Berta Huszar	Level 4 Staff

From Left to Right:

Allyson, Dr. Fawzi, Justin, Robert Kennedy (Head of Department), Ahmed Selim, Mu Mu Winn (Front)

A Picture of the Head of the Foundation English Department and the Co-ordinators

Administration and Faculty Support

by Ahmed Selim

One of the first things we decided to do after I accepted this position was to expand the title to include "Faculty Support." We did this to emphasize the role of this office as an advocate for teachers. After redefining the role of this office, we created the Administration and Faculty Support Task Force. The mission of this task force is:

To provide a positive work environment for both the professional and personal growth of our faculty through dynamic, realistic and creative solutions, transparent communication, advocacy, understanding, and an agency for action for the many challenges ahead.

The challenges for this group were amplified by the fact that the Asian Games had changed the dynamics of life in Doha. These changes impacted housing decisions for new teachers, complicated traffic routes and the settling-in process and delayed textbook, paper and new photocopier arrivals. In short, it limited our resources to address the needs of the faculty—not an ideal situation to inaugurate a taskforce dedicated to support the faculty. Now that everyday issues are no longer dominating our agenda, the group has been able to strategically plan for this coming year.

With the above mission statement as a guide, our goal is to find reasonable and achievable solutions to some of the inconveniences experienced by any rapidly growing program. When the work place is fun and supportive, productivity is higher. Though housing is not in the jurisdiction of our job, we knew that many of the problems that impact how a teacher feels at work stem from problems they may be facing outside of work. We took the initiative to visit the housing leadership and ask for reforms to be made in the areas of communication and choices available to Foundation teachers. This is a long-term project worthy of our full attention.

Socially:

Knowing full well about the frustrations new teachers were facing with the complicated settling-in process, we organized a mentoring system and a night on the corniche, dinner and boat-ride as way to break the ice between returning teachers and new ones. Another social function we organized was the Ramadan Iftar. We are currently working on an end of semester celebration at a Shahineya Farm.

Communication:

In terms of transparent communication, we initiated the weekly update to cut down on the number of administrative e-mails coming through, and are currently working on a "one-stop" shopping webpage that should address most of the concerns, information and resources that teachers need access to in order to feel a greater sense of accomplishment and reduce the level of anxiety that can occur.

Advocacy:

The first step in this new role for the office of Administration and Faculty Support was to conduct a needs analysis. This was action-planned from day one, but administered after the midterm exams to help give teachers some time to gain perspective on the new academic year. As we expected, the areas of concern that the Teacher Satisfaction Opinion Survey (affectionately dubbed "the SOS") pinpointed were those of: teaching load, salary, job security, housing and the settling-in process. Based on these results, a presentation was made by the Foundation

leadership to the President and higher university administration. The President was swift to act on the issue of teaching load and solutions for the other issues are under study for the long term; however, we are making an effort to be more involved in informing the Human Resources Department on the needs of our new staff.

Another focus for advocacy will be to help improve people's perception of job security. Difficult decisions were made this year about contract non-renewals. Though this office was not involved in the process, it has requested that the criteria for possible non-renewal be published to all staff, and in a gesture of support to these cases, the department is paying for them to attend TESOL Arabia to have an opportunity to interview at the job fair.

Professional Growth

We are putting on a mini-conference in early February. The theme is "Transitions in Teaching." This mini-conference will sample our ability to host a conference in the future where we can invite teachers in the community. The presentations will be aimed at hands-on ideas that our instructors can apply in the classroom. In addition to the mini-conference, Blackboard training will be a major focus for the semester to come.

New Staff Support

First impressions are essential. This is an area we can work to improve. A specific taskforce has been set up to address how to improve the system for next year by proactively communicating with the Human Resources Department, writing a staff handbook and organizing a welcome to QU packet.

Teamwork

Ultimately, the work is cut out for us, but Together Everyone Achieves More! I would like for all of us to feel and work like we are on the same side. We have a shared destiny and the success of one will never come as a result of a defeat to another.

Curriculum Development Update
Fall Semester 2006

By Mu Mu Winn

Curriculum development has been part of an ongoing process to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Foundation English Program since its implementation in Fall Semester, 2004. The Program is in its third year – an interesting time when things are beginning to take shape, and clearer pictures are emerging. It is also a time for reflection, to look back at how much we have accomplished in our efforts to provide students with the language skills needed to succeed in an academic environment, and to identify areas which need further improvement.

When I accepted my new role as Curriculum Coordinator in September 2006, it was not without some hesitation, as I foresaw the challenges of keeping up the good work my predecessor had begun, and at the same time introducing change or development in the areas that were still deficient. But I decided to give it a try, and since then have become extremely interested and involved in the development of the Program. My responsibilities include

* initiating and supervising curriculum development projects

* collaborating with Level Supervisors on curriculum implementation

* liaising with the Testing Coordinator on assessment and examinations

* communicating with and meeting publishers

* evaluating /selecting course materials

* chairing curriculum group meetings

* preparing curriculum evaluation tools such as interviews and questionnaires.

The following is a progress report on Fall Semester 2006:

New Staff Orientation

Twenty-six new teachers joined our department in September, 2006. As part of their orientation activities, a Power Point presentation on the "Foundation English Program" was given on 18th September, and key aspects of the program were explained. Immediately following this was Dr. Muawia Abdul Majid's Power Point presentation on a summary of staff feedback on the North Star course materials which the program adopted in Fall Semester 2005, replacing the New Headway series. Hard copies of the updated course description and materials evaluation feedback were distributed. Digital copies of the above documents, as well as the updated version of the document "Goals, Outcomes and Assessment Procedures" were also circulated to new staff as well as returning staff.

Preparation and Distribution of Documents

Following meetings with the Testing Group and Level Supervisors, details on class work assessment and exams were finalized and syllabi and course outlines were updated. Some modifications to the syllabus were made, based on feedback from teachers at each level. Copies of the syllabus and course outline for each level were distributed to teachers via Level Supervisors on 18th September. Course outlines were distributed to students by class teachers beginning 24th September.

Hard copies of the document "Guidelines on Assessment of Classwork/Participation" were distributed to all Foundation staff in week 1.

Modifications to Syllabus

No major problems were reported in the teachers' evaluation questionnaire for Spring 2006. However certain areas of the syllabus were perceived to be in need of further development. Based on recommendations and in consultation with the curriculum group, certain modifications were added to the syllabus for Fall 2006. These include –

* A pilot Extensive Reading Project for all levels
* A modified assessment system for class work and participation
* A supplementary listening practice course for Level 3
* A pilot Debate Project for Level 3.

Students Course Books for Fall 2006

Although book orders had been placed in March, 2006, unexpected problems related to a new text book delivery and distribution system led to delays in the distribution of student course books. Level 1 students and male students managed to get all the required books. However, most female students in levels 2, 3 and 4 remained without books far into the semester. With the assistance of Dr. Khalid, the Director of the Foundation Unit, and Bob, our Head, arrangements were made for mass photocopies of selected units of the course books to ease the situation. Level Supervisors took charge of later copying requirements with the help of the English Department secretarial staff.

Student Course Books for Spring 2007

As the purchase and delivery of course books ordered for the academic year 2006-2007 had only been partially completed, it was necessary to place new book orders for Spring Semester 2007 as an interim measure. The book orders were approved and forwarded to the Procurement Department through the Text Book Section on November 19th, 2006. The book delivery system has been changed back to the existing one before Fall 2006, and it is hoped that this will facilitate timely delivery of course books and a much smoother system of distribution at the beginning of Spring Semester 2007.

Curriculum Development Action Plan for 2006-2007

A meeting with Level Supervisors took place on 24th September. The agenda included syllabus updates, exams and assessment, and setting up of curriculum project groups and outlining a curriculum development action plan. Below are

some of the key projects included in the curriculum development action plan:

Curriculum Project Groups

	OBJECTIVE	PROJECT	TIME LINE	Action to be taken
1.	Independent learning skills through reading	Extensive Reading Project	Fall Semester - Weeks 1 – 12	Pilot project; guidelines for implementation and assessment. Liaise with SLC for materials. Evaluation.
2.	Improvement in students' vocabulary range	Vocabulary Expansion	Fall and Spring Semester	Prepare lists, definitions and supplement exercises for vocabulary building; review existing material/edit. List most frequently used words.
3.	Competency in academic writing	Guidelines for students' Writing Portfolio	Fall Semester - Weeks 1 - 14	Develop/consolidate guidelines, implementation and assessment procedures for students' writing portfolio. Liaise with SLC writing community.
4.	Enhanced speaking/listening skills	Listening/Speaking Practice and Assessment	Fall Semester - Weeks 1 - 14	Develop materials/ introduce new activities e.g. debates; guidelines for implementation and assessment. Evaluate syllabus and course content through feedback from teachers, students. Prepare evaluation tools, e.g questionnaires, observations, interviews and workshops. Analyze findings.
5	Curriculum development	Needs analysis and Curriculum Evaluation	Before end of Fall semester	

A Core Curriculum group, a Multimedia–CALL group, and Level Curriculum groups for each level were organized following a coordinators' meeting to assign teachers to various projects. Please see organizational chart on page 6.

Curriculum group members have already started contributing to project work. Activities include:

* Development of materials and book lists for the Extensive Reading Project

* Development of supplementary materials to fill gaps/deficiencies in the syllabus

* Implementation of a pilot Debate Project in Level 3

* A student questionnaire for needs analysis

* A staff questionnaire for needs analysis

* Interviews with student representatives

* Interviews with Post Foundation teachers.

Multimedia Program Development

In the first few weeks of the semester, new Focus on Grammar software materials were installed in all multimedia labs and checked by Aladdin Halwani (Head of the Multimedia group) and technicians. Planet English was reactivated for students on the women's campus at a later date, but technical problems have so far made it difficult to install in the labs on the men's campus. A demonstration of a new English language courseware, Dyned was held on 5th October, 2006. However, teachers who attended the demonstration decided the program was unsuitable for our Foundation students. Meanwhile, other options to replace Planet English are being considered, as the contract expires in August 2007.

On December 11th, 2006, a presentation was given by a new staff member, Constandinos Demetriades, on his EFL website "Writing English Online" to curriculum and multimedia group members. It was recommended, that following positive feedback on this interactive program, that selected groups of students be

given access to the website as a trial program for multimedia activities in the Spring Semester. Depending on the outcome of the trial use of the website, "Writing English Online" may be introduced as part of the multimedia syllabus in the academic year 2007-2008.

In-house Collaboration

Curriculum development depends on collaboration with other project groups within the English Department. To accommodate students for their Extensive Reading Project in the Spring Semester, plans are being made, in liaison with Allyson, the Students' Support Coordinator, for the possible loaning out of graded readers at the Student Learning Center. Besides being a center for learning support, the Student Learning Center is also being used as a venue for meetings with student representatives for feedback on syllabus and materials used in the Foundation English courses.

There is also ongoing dialogue with Justin, the Testing Coordinator, on the development of the assessment and testing system to contribute towards effectiveness of the Program as a whole. Issues such as weighting, exam content, priority areas in the syllabus, and analysis of exam results are discussed periodically, and student and teacher feedback considered. Based on feedback on the Mid-semester Exam, it has now been decided that there will be more involvement on the part of Level Supervisors in determining coverage and content of exams.

Curriculum Evaluation

A primary task for the curriculum group is to collect information from all those stakeholders involved in or affected by the Foundation English Program. These stakeholders include students, teachers, client colleges and staff teaching Post–Foundation students. Surveys through questionnaires, interviews with student representatives, and interviews with key staff members will be part of the overall attempt to gain insight into the needs of the program and

to assess its effectiveness in meeting the program goals and objectives.

Past survey results indicate that the current course materials for Levels 1 and 2 are generally satisfactory, though in need of further improvement. However, in Levels 3 and 4, some teachers have expressed dissatisfaction with some sections of the North Star series. Consequently, the course books are being reviewed and re-evaluated, and curriculum group members are keeping our options open while looking at materials/course books which may more accurately meet the requirements of our program.

A report on the findings of this needs analysis will be prepared at the end of this semester, and necessary action taken based on suitable recommendations. As stated earlier, evaluation will continue to be an ongoing process even after developments or innovations are implemented, as a healthy and dynamic ESL program should continue to evolve and adjust according to the changing needs of the clients it serves.

Looking Ahead

As with other fields of learning, EFL/ESL programs are being impacted by advances in e-learning technology. One crucial change in our program may be the introduction of Blackboard to encourage more student involvement through interactive web-based activities.

Training of staff in applying Blackboard was initiated in Spring 2006, but more staff need to be familiarized with this new teaching tool. We look forward to the time when every student will have a lap top in the classroom and be ready for innovative language activities that use multimedia or the Internet.

Another change in our program may be the introduction of preparation workshops or courses for TOEFL iBT as an integral part of the syllabus. This is being considered in view of the fact that Foundation students will be required to take the TOEFL iBT (instead of the institutional paper test) in the near future.

The Student Learning Centres

Allyson Young, Student Services Coordinator

In this last year the English Foundation Department has run two Student Learning Centres: one on the mens' campus and one on the womens' campus. The aim of a Student Learning Centre is to foster independent learning in the student. The centres promote the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways. There are self-access materials, student clubs, tutorial services, presentations and workshops. Our SLCs have quite a range of self-access materials. The womens' SLC has its own TOEFL corner, which students make great use of. A similar TOEFL corner is being built up on the mens' side. Students can also find self-study material to practice for the IELTS exam. Other resources include a huge collection of readers. A recent addition are the Doha Debate DVDs. We are working on implementing a system of lending and borrowing of these materials. Both centres have recently acquired a television each with DVD player and video player. Consequently, we will be looking at stocking up on a collection of films.

The womens' SLC has recently been re-connected to internet. This delay in getting connected was due to the installation of wireless internet. This means that female students will be able to use their laptops in the centre. As one of our multimedia projects we are developing CALL materials for use on the computers. Students can use these interactive materials to revise what they have studied in class.

Another way of promoting language learning is through the student clubs. These have been more successful on the womens' campus than on the mens' campus. The clubs we offer this semester are: the poetry club; the speaking club; the photography club; the Japanese culture club; and the debating club. We particularly hope to build up our debating club, so we can participate in inter-university debating challenges with educational institutions such as Qatar Foundation and the College of the North Atlantic. We are also looking into the possibility of setting up a film club (to run on from the very successful film club we had last semester).

We have greatly increased the tutorial services that we offer. Again, these are more frequented by female students than by male students. We have weekly tutorials in PowerPoint presentation skills; grammar; and writing. On the mens' side we have special TOEFL tutorials for semester 4 students. We have also formed reading tutorial groups for Humanities students.

The SLC has been running regular presentations. Student attendance has been good for most of these presentations. The most popular presentation was on the TOEFL paper-based exam, with 120 students attending. The other presentations have been given in the following areas: IELTS - an introduction; TOEFL IBT speaking and reading; TOEFL IBT listening and writing. We are having further presentations and workshops in the very near future on TOEFL; IELTS and study skills.

Our next step is to look at ways that we can integrate the course syllabus more tightly with the SLC. We will be looking at the possibility of rewarding students who make use of the extra-curricular activities and resources of the SLC. We also welcome back Abeer Ameen Mahmoud from maternity leave. We missed her and the good job she did. And also, with resuming her work in the female SLC, a lot of teachers who have been 'manning' the center will have more time to get on with their SLC projects.

Testing & Assessment

By Justin Richards

The following innovations have been implemented during the fall semester:

1. A new organizational structure designed to provide a more cohesive approach to writing exams.

2. A manual for teachers outlining policy and procedures.

3. A manual for test writers and reviewers.

4. Standardized exam format and structure in the following areas:

- item types

- number of items & sections

- instructions

- format

- answer sheets

4. A more accurate and systemized approach to reporting grades and statistics.

5. An improved approach to recording listening transcripts using the testing room.

How we produce exams is still evolving as a process. Most of the basic structure is now in place. We have a systematic way of writing, reviewing and administering exams. All parts of the process still need improvement, but the foundations are there. However, there are two major concerns. The greatest concern lies in the most important part of the process – the test writers. Until writers are given sufficient time to write, it will be difficult to make significant progress. The other concern is that greater organization and support are needed for the basic logistics involved with producing and administering our exams. These are issues that need to be addressed by the university administration. The long term success of the testing group will be defined by the speed and efficacy with which the university reform process takes place.

The testing group is made up of teachers who volunteer their time for the benefit of all in the department. Test writing is a demanding and often thankless task. It's easy to criticize an exam; it's not so easy to write one. I would like to thank all those involved in the production of our exams: test writers, reviewers, proof readers, vocal 'talent' for the listening recordings, level supervisors, the writing team supervisors and the office staff. Your contributions are greatly appreciated. Working with all of you is the most rewarding part of my job.

Post Foundation, Humanities and Adjunct Courses

Dr. Mohammad Fawzi

The English Department offers courses in two main programs:

* Foundation

* Post Foundation-Humanities and Adjunct Courses. I supervise the teaching of courses pertaining to the latter, i.e. Post Foundation 201-1, 202-1, Humanities 201-0, 202-0 & Adjunct Courses.

Course 201-1 is designed to help the students achieve academic oral communication to the standard required at university level. The main focus of the course is on advanced speaking skills. Venues for speaking and listening include both group discussions and individual oral presentations as students grow in competence and confidence in using English as a second language.

Course 202-1 aims at enabling the students to express themselves coherently in writing. The main focus of the course is on academic writing skills. The course builds on the knowledge the students required from the previous course (811201-1). The syllabus consists of activities

and exercises that provide the necessary and common skills for writing descriptive, instructive, argumentative, and expository essays. In addition, the course deals with the steps required for "term paper" writing such as choosing a topic, searching the Internet, planning an outline, using the library, structuring the term paper (into introduction, body, conclusion), documenting the sources using the APA system, writing the first draft, revising the first draft, writing the final draft on the computer, and proofreading.

English 0-811201 aims mainly at enabling the students to bridge the gap between school and university English learning and to improve students' competence in grammar, reading, and vocabulary.

English 0-811202 is a 3 credit hour reading comprehension course. The main purpose of this course is to improve the students' reading comprehension and help students recognize and use vocabulary in context. The course emphasizes the reading skills of scanning, skimming, previewing and predicting.

In adjunct courses, the aim is to organize English courses as required by various university departments and other institutions. As an example English for Library staff (October 2, 2006 – January 8, 2007) is currently being offered. The objective of this course is to provide the library staff with proper language skills to enable them utilize English at work and improve their communication skills. Mr. Jonathan Savery and Mr. Ahmad Hathratzad were chosen to teach the course.

* This outline presents projects to further develop the courses offered

A. Blackboard Academic Suite: Post Foundation Courses 201-1 & 202-1

It is the first time students in the Post-Foundation courses, English Department, have used an online learning system called Blackboard Academic Suite.

The goal of using this online system is to promote independent e-learning among learners and reinforce classroom instructions. Students in the Post-Foundation courses are now provided with every opportunity to communicate ideas and express concerns with their teachers as well as fellow classmates.

Teachers Involved: M. Fawzi and Aladdin Halwani are mainly involved in the design and implementation of the project.

B. Evaluating pilot course 811201-1

The main aim of this project is to evaluate the new syllabus for course 811201-1 which is being piloted now on six groups only. The use of this syllabus as alternative to the existing one depends on the results of the evaluation.

The process of evaluation will be supervised by the Core Curriculum Committee.

Dr. M. Fawzi, Mr. Aladdin Halwani, and Mr. Hani Al Kuteifan, from the English Department, are involved in this process. The major steps in the process are:

- Questionnaire to the course teachers

- Questionnaire to the students

- Exam results

- Class visits (By the head of the Core Curriculum Committee to the teachers involved in teaching the pilot course)

C. Post Foundation 811202-1 (New Syllabus)

Aim: This project is set by the Core Curriculum Committee. It aims at writing a new syllabus for course 811202-1 this semester. The project guidelines are as follows:

1. A committee of two teachers from the post foundation program was formed and asked to write a new syllabus for course 811202-1 this semester. The new syllabus should be in line with the standards set by the Core Curriculum Committee.

2. The new syllabus will be piloted on a small scale next semester.

3. It will be evaluated and if the results are positive, the syllabus will be used instead of the old one.

The Garden of Verse

The Stream, for Ron Hardaker

By John Morris

Memory cries, "Give us green mountains, the dust of roads,
each year's all-out endings,
leaves burning green and gold.

Keep always these sun-apple settings,
these wheeling deep-blue edges
and the moon's tenses, forever----."

Though gone, our old friends wade
knee-deep, still angling
where bright fish leap

and time takes its time.
And so today, they are here,
gathered at God's oldest river:

Their voices cast-out
over still water,
lives flashing in the sun.

They wade amid choirs
of mosquitoes, stunned,
their lines singing overhead.
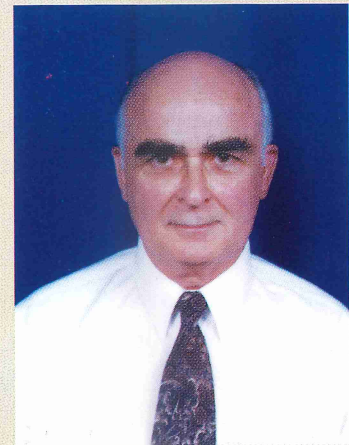
Our apologies to Dr. Morris for the formatting error in the 'Garden of Verse' published in the previous issue. We reprint here his poem 'The Stream,' dedicated to our colleague Ron Hardaker. We hope we are forgiven. Thanks to Dr. Morris for all his invaluable contibutions to the Newsletter.

The Foundation English Program
In the Asian Games
Doha - 2006
{Prepared by Eileen Plumb}

Eileen Plumb

Volunteering in the Opening Ceremony

I volunteered to participate in the Opening Ceremony of the 2006 Doha Asian Games, and it was a wonderful experience! I was cast as part of the Horse Caravan, representing Central Asia (countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan); we didn't dress up like horses, but our movements were designed to remind people of horses, and we had a picture of a horse on our costumes. Our part of the show involved nearly 1,000 people, so we needed to practice a lot. We met at least twice a week for three hours at a time, and this went on for several months (from early September to December). We weren't allowed to tell anyone about the details of the rehearsals, or to take pictures. There was a lot of waiting and repetition, but this gave me the chance to get to know a lot of wonderful people that I would never have met otherwise (and to learn some phrases in Tagalog and Singalese!).

As the date of the Opening Ceremonies drew near, things began to get more exciting. We moved our rehearsals to the real venue (Khalifa Stadium), and the professional dancers and acrobats arrived. The ones dancing with us were from Kazakhstan, and they hardly spoke any English at all, so communication was challenging. Of course, the big surprise for everyone was the storm on the day of the event – we all got very wet, but luckily, nobody's spirits were dampened. We were fortunate enough to be able to watch from the stands after our part had finished, which was wonderful, because we didn't know anything at all about the rest of the show. Being part of the Opening Ceremonies has added a whole new dimension to my Doha experience, and I feel very lucky to have been a part of it.

I am pictured here with a good friend I made during rehearsals, Pam Gamboa.

Ameen Al-Hemyari

Media Services

I volunteered to help the media staff. They asked me to be a member of Asian Games News Service (AGNS) team. This picture was taken in the mixing zone where the media staff meet the athletes after the matches. I was asked to interview athletes in the mixing zone and take flash quotes. I and some other volunteers who do this work were called flash quote reporters. We watched the match and met the athletes in the mixing zone. We asked them questions about their performance in the match and about their feeling of winning or losing the match. I enjoyed volunteering for the Asian Games and I met a lot of people of different nationalities. I have also learned a lot of things about sports and about the athletes. I am really proud of this participation and of serving the State of Qatar.
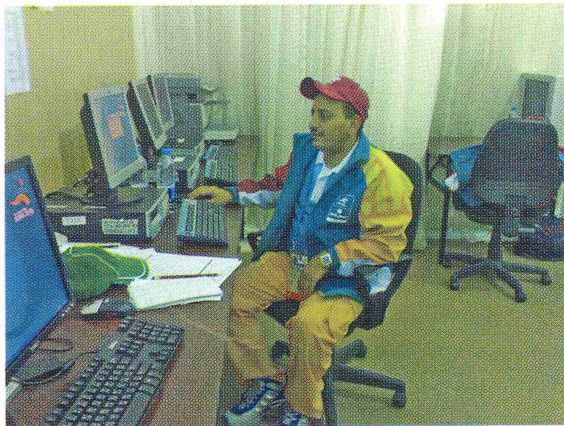
Kambiz Ghadamkhair

Media Services

I was one of the volunteers in Al-Sadd Stadium. I worked with Media Services as a Photo Team Leader for 5 to 7 hours a day for 14 days. It was such a wonderful experience. I believe everyone should take such an opportunity if it is available to them, even if one has no experience at all, because it might come around only once in a lifetime. The work was not easy, yet I really enjoyed it. I had the opportunity to learn about the Cue Sports, Water Polo and Sepak Takrow (which had the biggest number of fans).

James Fitzgibbon
Cultural Events

I was lucky enough to see several of the cultural events of the Asian Games at Sport City. I saw a an intriguing prehistoric display at the Sheraton hotel, and many different dance arrangements from various regions. These events were well-rehearsed, well-choreographed, and, thus, extremely enjoyable. They will leave an indelible impression on my memory! Here are some pictures I took of the events:
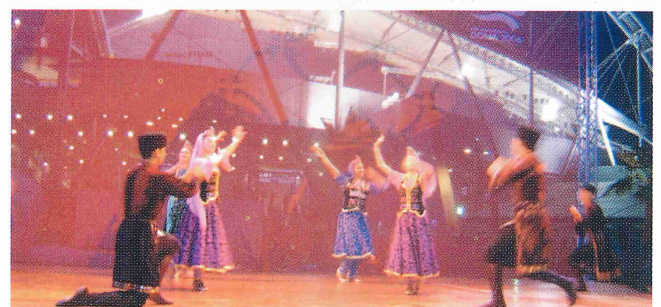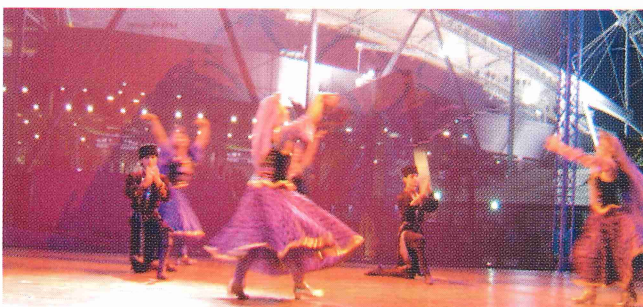

A musical group from Kyrgyzstan
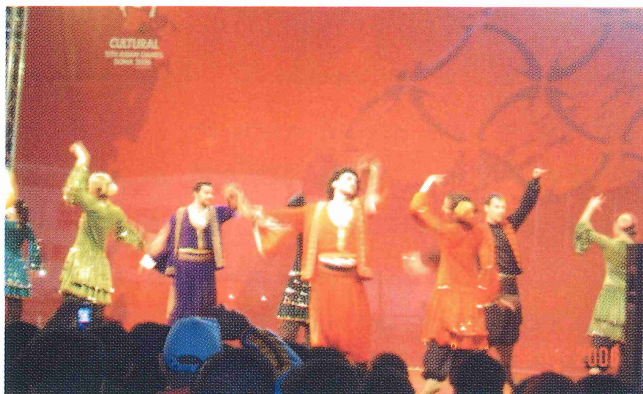
A musical and dancing group from Syria

A musical and dancing group from Bali

A musical and dancing group from Azerbaijan

Jay Trimiar
Media Services

For 13 days I worked at Al-Saad Stadium as a Flash Card Reporter for the Sepaktakraw Competition at the 15th Annual Asian Games. During the 13 days that I participated, I attended 92 matches and interviewed coaches and athletes from over 11 Asian countries. After interviewing coaches and athletes about their passion for the sport Sepaktakraw* competition and performance, I would then submit it to the Asian Games Media Services, where quotes would then be given to international media companies throughout Asia. Being a part of the Asian Games was a real highlight for me this year in Doha. As a result of my participation, I gained a great experience at being as an amateur journalist, met new people, and made new friends from around the world.
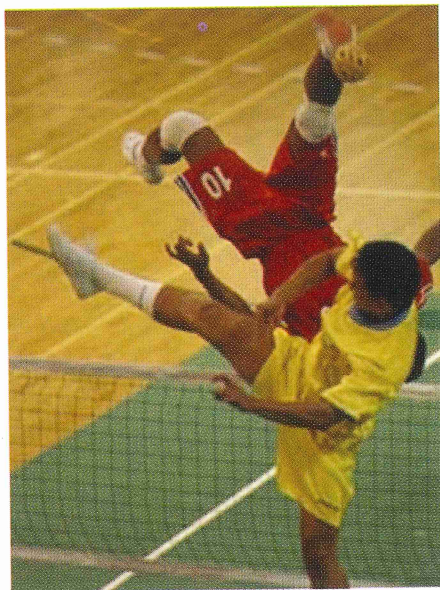
Sepaktakraw is played on a court with a hand-woven ball (takraw) by teams made up of two or three people on each side. Points are scored by hitting the ball above the net and into the court (about the size of a badminton court) as the opposing players attempt to "block."

For more information about this unique sport, please refer to the following website:

http://www.doha2006.com/gis/menuroo t/sports/Sepaktakraw.aspx?id=SE

Shireen Al-Maghrabi
Al-Gharrafa Club

"All paid jobs absorb and degrade the mind."

- Aristotle (384 BC - 322 BC)

I had the chance to practice volunteer work when I was accepted by the Volunteer Program of the Doha Asian Games Organizing Committee (DAGOC). I was assigned a role with the workforce team at Al-Gharrafa Club, one of the biggest venues of the Games. All volunteers were required to attend a number of induction and job-specific training sessions which prepared them for their expected roles. In these sessions, the importance of being committed and acting in a professional manner was reiterated. My actual work as a volunteer in the Asian Games started in the last week of November and continued until mid-December. It was such a pleasure wearing my Asian Games uniform every morning and going to the venue to join my team at the check-in desk. It was a wonderful feeling to meet hundreds of the staff working at Al-Gharrafa Club who came from all over the world with only one goal: to make the Doha 2006 Asian Games a success.

Volunteers (totaling 12,000, including 60 international volunteers) were generously rewarded by DAGOC with many things in appreciation of their work and dedication, such as:

* an appreciation Card giving discounts in different stores all over Doha.

* a one-day tour of the Athletes Village and ASPIRE.

* a uniform

* a ticket to the Dress Rehearsal of the Opening Ceremony

* free tickets to some of the games

* daily souvenir gifts

* engraving the names of all volunteers on

a huge board at Khalifa Stadium

* a Certificate of Appreciation signed by HH Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani; Chairman of the Board of Directors, Doha Asian Games Organising Committee.

* a gold medal

However, the greatest reward was being offered the opportunity to participate in this unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience. Good Luck to Qatar in organizing the 2016 Olympic Games.

John Wallen

Doha Games Finish On High Point

The final itself may have been a tense and ugly affair, but there can be no denying that Qatar deserved to be crowned soccer champions at these games. They played with a steely resolve throughout and it seemed amazing to those neutrals watching the final game against Iraq, that the result was only 1-0 to Qatar. After the game, the Qataris celebrated throughout the country with great vigour and good manners. The absence of mindless chanting and singing during these celebrations, taken together with the Qataris genuine joy, endeared the locals to the many foreigners present who had only wanted to see some good football played.

After the match, on Friday night, central Doha was the scene of happy celebrations as locals in cars, on motorcycles and bikes waved Qatari flags and, in the spirit of these games, often the Iraqi flag too. It was certainly a fairy tale ending to these 15th Asian Games which have impressed all visitors so much with their sleek efficiency and sense of fair play. The highlights were undoubtedly the amazing opening ceremony which left everyone breathless and the final victory by Qatar that brought the curtain down on such a special note. Between these two events, China emerged as the most successful single nation (as expected), and the spirit of the Asian Games, which although the second biggest sporting event on the planet had long lived in the shadow of the games in Europe and America, received a significant boost.

It remains a significant possibility that the Gulf region will host the 2016 Olympic Games—and if this happens the Doha Games will have done a lot to convince the sporting officials that such an event would be very special.

English Foundation Students at the Sports City

Soud Nabil Al-Bardaweel

Level 2, Elisabeth Szewczyk

Our Asian Games Class Field Trip

Last week our English teachers surprised us by announcing a trip to Sport City. Our teacher, Mrs. Elisabeth, arranged it with Mr. Zain. We had hoped to go to the basketball match, but the tickets were sold out. The trip was on Tuesday morning. We were really happy to take a break from university classes. The students had to meet the teachers in front of the incredible turquoise-blue glass mosque. We waited there until everybody had arrived. After we were all there, we cruised around Sports City and looked at different places and monuments and took photographs. Then we went to a restaurant to have breakfast or drink coffee. Just before going to the diving competition, Mr. Zain decided to hold a competition in front of the restaurant to determine who was the best drummer, Sudqi or Abdulraouf. We cheered them on. Sudqi won the competition, but Abdulraouf was also pretty good.

Around ten o'clock we went to the Hamad Aquatic Centre to watch the diving competition. We saw divers from Malaysia, China, Kuwait, Qatar, Japan and the Philippines perform some amazing dives. Some divers got high scores and some got low scores. Someone even got zero once! The winner was from China, of course. The Chinese play very hard. After the competition we went to the beautiful blue glass mosque to perform the Al-Duhoor prayer. It is an awesome place to pray. Sunlight shines in from everywhere. After that, we went to see the Weaponry Exhibition in the Exhibition Hall. It was wonderful. We saw a lot of military equipment: old daggers, swords, cannons and guns. We also took photos in front of the weapons. The next part was the amazing photography exhibit with lots of photographs from many countries. Many of the photographs were from Arabian countries. We sat at an awesome machine called the Kaiserpanorama to look at old

photographs as a mechanical device revolved them around. This machine was built around 1889. It was pretty incredible. In conclusion, I had a wonderful day with our teachers and friends. I hope that we can have such a trip again one day.

Ahmed Al Buainin
Level 2, Elisabeth Szewczvk

Our Fieldtrip to Sports City

Last Tuesday morning during the Asian Games we went on a wonderful trip to Sports City. The trip was arranged by our teachers, Mrs. Elisabeth and Mr. Zain. We went there with students from our class, L2 M4, and some students from the other group, L2 M5. My day began when I left home around 8.00 a.m. I picked up two of my friends since I was driving my car. We reached Sports City around 8:15. We had arranged to meet at the unique and beautiful blue glass mosque. The glass roof was triangular in shape, like a giant wave with engravings. As we were waiting for the rest of the students to arrive, we sat on the mosque steps, talking and joking together. By 8:45, almost everybody had arrived. There were more than thirty students altogether.

The Exhibition Hall was closed until 9.00 a.m., so we decided to wander around and look at Sports City. We went to some of the sculptures to take photographs. Then some of us had breakfast in a nearby cafe. Around 9.30, Mr. Zain asked us to have a drum-beating competition as I had brought my drum with me. Naturally, I won the competition! By this time it was time to go to the diving competition which was being held in the Hamad Aquatic Centre. It was awesome to watch the divers, especially to see the Chinese divers' skills. The Chinese divers won the competition, as always seemed to be the case in the Doha Asian Games. The diving competition began at 10.00. I was very excited, especially when the Qatari divers took their turn. We stayed there until 11.15. Then we left to go to the Exhibition Hall. We performed the noon prayer, Adan Al-Duhoor in the blue glass mosque. It was great to pray in such a wonderful mosque with the bright sun shining through the walls and roof. It was peaceful; I felt that I was very near to Allah.

After finishing our prayers, we went to the exhibition hall to see the Weaponry Exhibit to look at old weapons, guns and armour. It was very interesting to see so many old swords, daggers, knives, rifles and shotguns. Later we visited the "Dawn of Photography" Exhibition. We saw a lot of incredible photos of many different places, both modern photos and old photos from the 19th

century. Seeing this was very useful to help increase our knowledge about other cultures. We sat at the Kaiserpanorama, a huge round wooden machine from the 19th century. It was a rotating picture machine; we had to sit on a chair and look through the viewfinder. The twenty-five pictures rotated automatically one by one. These were serigraphs of people and scenes from the Middle East taken around 1890 – 1910.   Our teacher said this machine was the origin of moving pictures which became motion pictures. This is where the word 'movie' comes from. Around 12.30 we got ready to leave Sport City. We felt very happy; we'd had a lot of fun on this trip. Finally, I just want to thank our teachers for this trip and I hope we can have another trip soon.

Sudqi Mohammed Al Jaijou
Level 2, Elisabeth Szewczvk

Asian Games Gold for Qatar: An Exciting Football Match

Friday, 15 December was the very last day of the Doha Asian Games. One match was left to be played – the final football match. The match was to be played between Qatar and Iraq and I knew it was going to be fantastic. It was going to be held at the Al-Saad Sports Stadium. I went as soon as I could to get tickets for the match. It was really hard to find tickets; there were so many people who wanted tickets waiting at the ticket counter. It was chaotic. Finally, after a long wait, I was able to get my tickets.

On the day of the match, I went to the entry gate. We were told to arrive early. The place was so crowded. Everyone was happy and excited, and some people were singing songs. At last, we managed to enter the stadium. The Al Saad Sport Stadium is awesome! The atmosphere was terrific! The stadium was full of fans for both Qatar and Iraq.   I sat with the Qatari fans. We had to wait about half an hour for the game to begin. Finally, the game started. It was a super match! The crowds of spectators and fans cheered and shouted all the time. It was an incredible game! We all had so much fun. During the first half neither team scored a goal, so we felt a bit bored and disappointed, but then Qatar scored a goal! The Qatari fans and players felt so excited and happy. Qatar won the match. It was amazing! The final score was one–nil for Qatar. The Qatari fans were so excited to see their team win the Gold Medal. The crowds went wild. I finally managed to escape the stadium. It had been an awesome day and I feel very proud of my team.

STUDENT WRITING SECTION

{Prepared by Eileen Plumb}

Our students have truly shown their skill in producing excellent pieces of writing. Essays were drawn from all levels as well as from the Post-Foundation Program. If you have a piece of writing or another contribution that you would like to see included in the next Foundation English Department Newsletter, please contact your Foundation English instructor, or e-mail me at e.plumb@qu.edu.qa Enjoy !
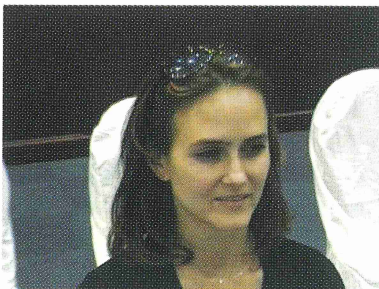
Staying in the Desert in a Tent

Maryam Abdullah Al-Nasor - Level 1

Teacher: Eileen Plumb

Staying in the desert, especially in a tent, is a good way to have fun and relax; it is also a nice kind of adventure. As you will see, it has both advantages and disadvantages. The desert is a good place to search for new animals that we have never seen before, such as the spotted snake. Also, we can try to live in places different from our own house. The most important thing is that we can breathe healthy air without car smoke. The first thing that I hate in the desert, though, are the dangerous animals. The second thing is that there are no emergency hospitals in case an accident happens there. The last thing, which everyone hates, is the little insects that make us nervous and can maybe even kill us. Staying in the desert, especially in a tent, has advantages and disadvantages. In general, though, it is a great adventure, and a good way to have fun and relax.

Save the Blue Whale

Marwa Ahmad Al-Shaikh - Level 1

Teacher: Eileen Plumb

Bob Jones, Editor

Doha Daily News

P.O. Box 1234

Doha, Qatar

November 27, 2006

Dear Mr. Jones,

I am a shipmaster, and I am interested in saving the blue whale, because I see it every day near my ship. I would like to share with all your readers why it is so important to protect this beautiful creature. Why is the blue whale in danger?

For one thing, hunters catch small fish which the blue whales eat, to sell them and get a lot of money. As a result, blue whales are dying more quickly than they did in the past. In addition, sometimes the oil leaks from ships put oil into the sea. Because of this, the blue whale is now considered an endangered animal.

Why should we care about the blue whale? Because of the oil and the hunters, there are only 2,500 – 3,000 blue whales left in the world. If we do not try to save them, there will not be any left by 2030. The blue whale is the largest mammal to ever have lived on Earth. If all the blue whales die, we will lose the natural balance in the world. Also, we will lose a special animal, because the blue whale is very beautiful.

What can we do? Everyone should be careful about oil ships. In addition, people can donate money to Save the Blue Whale, to help build a special protected area just for this species.

Sincerely,

Marwa Al-Shaikh

Student-Centered vs Teacher-Centered Teaching

Farah Iyad Ahmed English 2 (Post Foundation)

Teacher: Aladdin Halwani

Learning is a process of communication. It attempts to transform a state of ignorance to knowledge. The variety of teaching methods which are used within a course is an important ingredient in creating a course with interest to students.

The first method of teaching is where the students are passive recipients of information

or knowledge given by the teacher. The teacher dominates as the center of learning; the students learn by listening. This is known as a teacher-centered approach in education. This teacher-centered method views the teacher as active and the student as fundamentally passive. The teacher is responsible for transmitting all of the information to the students. The teacher talks; the students listen and absorb (or take a nap). In this method the teacher should be the focus of the classroom, since he/she knows the language and the students don't.

The second method is called the student –centered method. In this method, both student and teacher are active participants and it leads to a dynamic classroom environment in which teaching and learning become rewarding and enjoyable. Sometimes students don't feel very comfortable to share their thoughts in public, but when they discover that student-centered method enables them to develop their skills while having fun, they usually become enthusiastic participants. This method encourages students to take responsibility for their own language skill development and to help them gain confidence about themselves.

In conclusion, both methods should be taught in the class room, because some subjects need to be explained by the teacher while the students need to listen. On the other hand, other subjects need to be discussed by the teacher and the students.

Advertising

Ghina Nadi Elkasti English 2 (Post-Foundation)

Teacher: Aladdin Halwani

Advertising was a new art in the twentieth century, opening a new way for competition between companies and producers. Usually, the decision of the consumer to buy a product is based on the quality and price of the item.

 Nowadays, advertisements have a big effect on this decision, and they have been criticized for not giving enough information, yet trying to persuade consumers to buy while being attracted by the colorful, bright imagination brought about by ads. In addition, advertising creates a demand for goods that are not really needed; one can see the people in the market filling their carts with almost every product seen on TV, but later on, they find out that these goods were only a waste of money.

Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine what commerce would be like with no ads! Consumers would still be using old products known from times immemorial that they had gotten used to, and would only know about the goods in their local shops. Here come the benefits of advertising: it gives up- to-date information about products, helps to sell to a bigger market, and refreshes commercial activities. This all leads to progress in developing the quality of goods and choosing a price to be, on the one hand, suitable for the consumer and, on the other hand, significantly profitable for the producing companies.

Today, advertising comes in every size and shape: billboards, TV commercial, flyers, Internet ads and many more that has made it harder for the consumer to get away from its addictive persuasion.

Above all, it's the consumer's responsibility to determine the truthfulness of the messages in ads and choose what is really needed from all these products.

The True Origins of the Pyramids of Egypt

Submitted by: Vahid Suljic - Level 2

Teacher : Elisabeth Szewczyk

Once upon a time, in a land of green hills, rocky mountains and quaint little villages, there reigned a great king, unrivalled in wealth and splendour. The King, King Turko II, was king of a land called Bosnia. He was a very famous king.   King Turko II was a good, wise, generous and just king who was loved by all his people. He was a great athlete: a swordsman, an archer and a wrestler.

King Turko had two sons called Ramses and Raamis. They were strong and loyal sons but unfortunately both of them loved the same woman, a lovely princess of Slavic origin. She was called Layla. Sadly, one day their father, King Turko, died. A dispute soon arose between the brothers as to who should succeed him as king. At last, Raamis, the stronger brother, said to Ramses, "You can have the woman, but I am taking the kingdom." In order to safeguard his throne, he told his brother to depart immediately and to go as far as away as possible to another land where he could reign as king. So Ramses and his new bride, Layla, travelled to a new land, a far away land along the shores of a mighty river.

There they settled and Ramses became king of the news land, a land called Egypt. Ramses had a plan to build a great monument to honour himself. He ordered marvelous pyramids to be built. The pyramids were a wonder to behold. And so they became the rulers of Egypt. And so, in truth, the royal pharaohs of Egypt are the descendents of the royal kings of Bosnia.

The Greedy Ending

Submitted by: Faisal L. Kubaisi - Level 2

Teacher : Elisabeth Szewczyk

Once there were two hungry young rats were fighting over a piece of cheese. Both of them kept trying to take the cheese for himself but neither managed to get any of it at all. After failing to solve this problem, both of them decided to visit a wise monkey called Raphael who was known to be one of the best judges and the wisest animal in the forest. So both of them went to complain about the piece of cheese. Raphael said to them, "Well, I think I can help make it better so no one will feel injustice, God willing".

Then Raphael started cutting the cheese into two pieces. After he had done so, he said to the two young rats, "Is this OK for both of you?" The first rat was not very happy with this and yelled, "Hey, wait a minute? Is this a stupid joke? He got a bigger piece than me!" So Raphael started thinking, then he grabbed a piece of cheese from the other rat, and quickly ate it. Again, he repeated, " Is this OK for both of you?" Then the second rat cried, " I knew it, I've been tricked!!! Each time he gets a bigger piece than me!!" Once again, the wise monkey grabbed a piece of cheese from the first rat piece and ate it. Suddenly, the first rat shouted. "NO!! His piece will be the bigger!" At that moment, the monkey starting eating the cheese. He kept doing the same thing until all the cheese was finished. Not a single piece was left. Then he opened his both hands and said "I think this was good justice, right?" Both of two rats angrily snarled,"Yes, we suppose so." So in the end, the two greedy rats went home with nothing. Justice was truly served.

So that's what happens when you are greedy – a greedy ending.
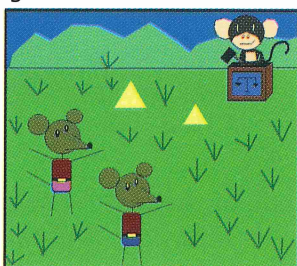
My Debut as An Actor

Nasr Nasser Al-Kharousi - Level

Teacher: Elisabeth Szewczyk

When I was in secondary school in Oman, I dreamt of becoming a famous actor. Unfortunately in my schools there was no drama club nor any other opportunity to realise this ambition. Instead, I would sometimes try to act or do role-play in class or in front of my friends. I loved acting and mimicking people My friends used to laugh at me and make fun of me. Sometimes it was very difficult, but I didn't care about them or their reactions. Many times I succeeded in making them laugh. I remember going to the front of the classroom after class was over and playing the role of our teacher. My classmates used to laugh at my performances. One day I got caught imitating my teacher and his way of teaching. Instead of being angry, he just laughed and told me I was a very good actor. Those words encouraged me to carry on acting.

Now I am here, living in the student hostel at Qatar University and attending Qatar University. When I heard about the play written by Mr. Ahmed Al-Muftah, I was very keen to join his theatre troupe. I decided I wanted to perform in his play, because I liked the script. It is very funny and very real at the same time. The message is clear; it talks about real issues confronting young men and communities today. My role was not too difficult; I played a young man who had to pay an expensive dowry to get married. This problem faces many youths nowadays. Last night I was very happy because I saw our hard work and effort become a reality. Our performance was a great success. Everybody in the audience enjoyed it and gave us a big applause. It was also exciting to see the movie cameras film us.

I have really enjoyed working with the cast, they are excellent. Nasser Sadi, Abdulla Sabri and Ali Khalaf played my brothers. Our father was played by Khalid Al-Jidi, a very funny actor. Nasser Manni, Omar Barudi and Mahmoud Zein Abideen were also actors in the play. Mahmoud really knows how to do comedy. We had great fun rehearsing and acting together. I really learnt a lot from the cast and from our wonderful director, Mr. Ahmed Al-Muftah. I really respect our director because he has taught us so many things – how to work together as a team, how to support each other, and how to be creative. He is the best director I know. Finally, I want to thank everybody who supported me: my friends, classmates, teachers and hostel-mates, and especially Mrs. Elisabeth who came to see me perform.

The Poor Mother

Submitted by: Ayat Rajab Dalloul - Level 2

Teacher: Shireen Al-Maghrabi

There was a boy called Ahmed. He was the only child in his family. His father died when he was a little boy in an accident, so he lived with his mother. But he didn't live a normal life like any other child, because his mother had only one eye and she never talked about it. He was so ashamed of his mother because of that. He never wanted his friends to see her because he knew that they would laugh at her and they would make fun of her, so he told her not to come to school.

One day, however, the school called her and asked her to come for an important meeting. So she went. Ahmed's friends saw her and they knew that she was his mother, but they could not stop themselves from laughing at her. Ahmed was very angry at his mother. When he went back home, he shouted at his mother, but the mother didn't say a word.

Days went by and Ahmed went away to college. He had to move to a new place in another part of the country. He lived away from his mother for 12 years! He got married and had children. His mother knew about that and she wanted to see him. She missed him, and wanted to see his wife and children. She went where he lived and rang the bell to find his children opening the door. She wanted to hug them, but they were so scared of her eye and they ran into the house. Ahmed came out to see who was there, and it was his mother. He shouted at his poor mother, and blamed her for coming to his house. She only said: "I'm sorry, it seems I got the address wrong. Bye.:

After two years, one of his relatives called him for a family reunion. He went there to see his family. When he got there, he didn't find his mother, so he asked about her. They told him that his mother had passed away. But she left him a letter. The letter said:

"Dear Son,

I'm so sorry for coming to your house without telling you; I just wanted to see

you and your children. I have to tell you something about yourself; when you were 3 years old, you had an accident – the same accident youf father died in. But, thank God, you survived, although you lost your eye in this accident, so I had to give you mine. And I was really happy to know that you were watching the world with my eye. I never wanted to tell you, so you wouldn't feel like an outcast.

With all my love,

Your mother

Description of an Ad

Fadwa Yousef Nassar - Level 2

Teacher: Theresa Mattingly

I used to watch TV everyday. All channels on TV offer different ads about different products. Some of these ads are effective and some are ineffective. Also, these different ads are offered by different methods. Three days ago, I saw an ad about a perfume and I enjoyed watching it because the person who offers it is my favourite singer. She appeared like a princess with a beautiful dress and a shiny coronet. She demonstrated the advantages of this perfume with a beautiful song. Also, she was in a huge palace so the appeal is ego. At the end, I think that this ad is very effective and convinces all people who watch it to buy the perfume because this ad tells the spectators that the person who uses this perfume must be a luxurious person. Also, the song and the music in the song had a very big effect. Finally, we should not forget the view of the princess with her palace because it was wonderful. Because of all these reasons, I think that this ad is very successful and effective.

Laura and Mark

Suhad Mohamed Amro, Aseel Atef Mohammed and Fatimah Abdullah Aloqayli - Level 2

Teacher: Theresa Mattingly

The house looks like a palace and it is pink. It has a big park with a lot of flowers, butterflies and birds. There is a swimming pool in front of the house. Mark and Laura were happy in their house, but one day Mark became angry because he wanted to be a dad and Laura didn't want to be a mum. She said that it was too soon. Mark got really angry and said, "It is impossible to live with you." Laura went to her room and she began to put her clothes in the bag. Then Mark started shouting, "I don't want you!" After that, she saw a cockroach and she ran and hugged Mark and they laughed. Finally they forgot the problem and had a lovely day.

Air Pollution

Laila M. Ahmadi - Level 3

Teacher: Dr. Ali Ahmed Hussein

Every day we harm the environment without noticing that, for example, we go to work by car and smoke during working hours. The smoke of factories is one of the primary causes of air pollution.

Air pollution is one of the most serious problems in this century caused by car smoke, cigars, and

factory smoke. All these kinds of smoke are toxic and have a bad smell, which affect our health and cause diseases such as lung cancer. This means DEATH at last!

In the future, more air pollution may cause a hole in the ozone layer. As we know, the ozone layer protects our environment from harmful sunrays which affect plants, animals and human beings.

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, people in the future may not be able to go outside during the summer, holidays or on weekends. This will negatively affect tourist activities.

To protect our environment from pollution, first we should reduce using private cars and use public transportation or bikes, or walk on foot. Second, we should forbid smoking in public areas. Third, we should build the factories in open areas far away from the cities. Last but not least, we need to develop a new system to reduce or control the bad effects of harmful factory smoke.

"We are nature, we are nature seeing nature" – so we have to protect the nature from pollution because nature is us and we are the nature.

Mandatory Volunteering

Fatima Al-Yazeedy - Level 3

Teacher: Dr. Ali Ahmed Hussein

All people want to develop their community and make it better, don't they? Old people need someone to take care of them. All children need to be more educated. The environment is getting worse. There are some people waiting for someone to help. Just imagine what will happen if we do our best to solve problems of other people. A mandatory community service will give us more and better experience in our life.

Mandatory volunteering is a very good idea, and it makes people discover and learn more about themselves. Mandatory volunteering has lots of bright sides, such as spending spare time in a very useful and productive way, helping us to develop ourselves. It is a way to discover others' interests, make us feel more responsible and concerned towards our community, and (the most important thing) make people interact with and relate to each other. I think it will make you feel more satisfied about what you do. If we think about it in a serious way, we will find that it's a very important way to develop our society, won't we?

In my opinion, one shouldn't judge something before trying it. I think the Mandatory Community Service Program should really be considered, shouldn't it?

My Future

Muna Said Al-Ismaaial - Level 3

Teacher : Lyrma Ingels

In this life, nobody is born for nothing. Everyone is born with a specific goal to which he or she builds his or her future. For me, my purpose is to be a good pharmacist. This is about my future.

I think that nobody can get his/ her own goal without working hard and effort. If I want to be a pharmacist, I must have some qualities that will help me reach my goal with less difficulties like, good communication skills, patience and creativity. First, I like communicating with others. In my opinion, this is a very important skill for anyone who wants to be a pharmacist. For example, anywhere I go, I meet and make a lot of friends. I learn and get more knowledge, and I also acquire new things from them like their habits. This skill will help me in the field of research. Another quality that I have is patience. If anybody in my family or friends is ill, I am able to help with all my efforts to make them feel better. Furthermore, creativity is another of my qualities. I like science inventions including discovering and making things with my hands. For example, I made a drug to kill ants by mixing some liquid. With this experience, it made me realize that I can do some more. Likewise at home, I help my mother in the kitchen by inventing new dishes despite the fact that I don't know what they are. I just get anything I see and mix the ingredients to come up with a nice combination.

Finally, to focus and on my goal and be positive are the main reasons to succeed in life. So, we need to be sure, determined, and love our goal. Because achieving it will make you happy in life.

Volunteering

Sara Adel Zakzok - Level 3

Teacher: Lyrma Ingels

Voluntary work is unpaid work. You don't have to do it, but you can choose to do it. These days, volunteering is becoming more important. In this essay, I will discuss about my own ways to employ my talent and treasure in donating to the poor, the sick, and the old. I hope to inspire others to volunteer.

I have always believed that everyone shares their talent or skills in a certain way to help other people. Then, no-one will need and ask for help anymore. My talent is cooking. Sometimes, I cook some dishes and donate them to the needy. For example, during Ramadan, I always cook sweets and give

them to the poor or our relatives. Sharing my talent gives me a great feeling of inner happiness.

In our world, there are millions of people who are needy. They need clothes, food, education and a lot of things. On the other hand, there are people who live very comfortably. I think these people should donate some of their treasure that God has given them. For me, I always donate my old clothes to charity. At the end of every year, I collect all my clothes and I give them to a community service program. In fact, I do this because I believe that God is very generous to us, so we should not be stingy to the poor and needy people.

In summary, volunteering is very important to having a great future. A great future is a world with no poor people on the streets, no charities, no hungry and needy people. Everyone will live in peace and safe from evils of societies. We can only achieve this great future by our own efforts.

A Life-Changing Experience

Lobna Mohammed Hamdan - Level 4

Teacher: Benjamin Crace

Here we are again; another group of "strangers" will come to see how miserable our life is. They just keep coming and coming in clusters, but doing nothing except giving us a look which I doubt means love…. I have to get some rest to be ready for the big meeting tomorrow that we will have with the Qatar University students; I don't really know where exactly they are from, but this is what I was told.

It's 9 a.m., and we (the orphans) have to wake up and dress well although we don't have any other outfit to wear to be ready to host our guests. I walk down the dirty and dusty stairs to wash my face in the only bathroom we have in the entire building (which has about 3 floors, and is shared by more than 40 kids). After waiting for my turn to use the bathroom, which normally takes 30 minutes, I go to the dining room to have breakfast. Don't get me wrong, we don't have a special room to have our food in. I mean, my bedroom is the same as my dining room and my living room. In my "dining room" all the orphans gather on a very small, brown ruined table that I'm proud of it because it hasn't collapsed yet, and we start to swallow our breakfast.

Notice that I said "swallow" instead of "eat" because when you eat, you taste the flavor of your food, smell the warm fresh bread, and

then you like it - that's why you eat it. But when you swallow something, you don't taste it because there is no flavor; you don't smell it because there is no freshness; you don't like it but you still have to eat it. Our food is unsavory, like our life, and it's never enough to fulfill you or satisfy you - at the end you will stay hungry. What if we stay hungry forever? But nobody knows what life has in store for you. Now the long-awaited moment is here: it's already 10 a.m., and our guests will be here any minute. I wonder what they look like, and whether they brought nice things, or if they are just here to watch us…

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"What are you staring at?" one of my teammates asked me. "At how we think we are managing our life while in fact we are not," I
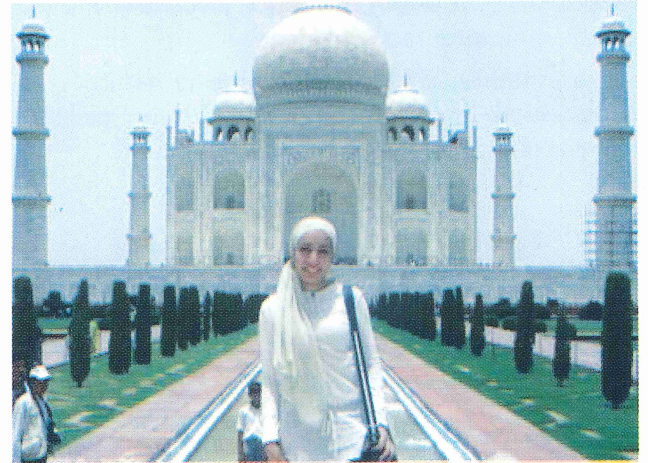
answered." You think that you chose to be successful, and chose to live a comfortable life, but you didn't. This is what God made. What if you were born poor and grew up without parents? Would you still believe that you are in control with your life?" I added. Then…silence fell in the car that was taking us the orphan shelter. All the way to see these kids, I was thinking how they would talk with us, play with us, look at us and react…and whether they would enjoy having us there in their place, or if it would cause them shame for us to see their poverty. Maybe they would think of us as a group of people curious about the lives of others, and that's it. I hoped they would like the things we had brought for them, such as school supplies, clothes and toys. It's 10 'o' clock and we are there now, ready to see these orphans face to face.

"Come on everybody, stand up and say good morning to our guests," the manager said to

the orphans, who were quietly and politely standing in their places. I hate those situations when you are the center of attention and everybody is waiting for your comments or words as if you were a sacred person. In the beginning, we didn't know what to do or say, but our supervisor suggested that we play football. After the game, all of us (me, my teammates and orphans) felt so relieved. We started to recognize the joy we had brought into their stable, tough life from their glimmering look.

I noticed that there was very special kid standing alone, watching, and I hesitated to go and converse. Then I thought: I'm here for once in my life, and I have to entertain these orphans as much as I can. With a big smile and a merry heart, I went to talk with him, but for some reason unknown to me, he wanted to ignore me. I was determined to let him know that my priority in this trip was to change his poverty into happiness and to whip away his tears. Trying to start a conversation i asked," Do you like it here?".

He said literally," No. life sad." I struggled, and didn't know what to say, because I hadn't expected him to acknowledge that about his life…and it's true that "life is sad"… or maybe he doesn't even have one. I told him that even if he were rich and living in a golden castle, he still wouldn't feel happy. I tried to let him understand that real happiness can't be found in money, but I think that people in his condition will never understand this; simply because they don't know what it means to be rich. I hooked my arm into his and let him involve himself with the others in the game to let him see that even in the shelter, you will

find some kids playing and you will hear some laughs coming out of it.

After having our lunch with them, it was time for us to leave. I thought that saying goodbye would be easy, because at the end you feel that you did what you were supposed to do. Well, it wasn't; "solid" - this is how I would describe it. I didn't want to let them go, and I just wanted to stay with them forever to show them the value of true love and glee. Sorrowfully, we said goodbye and went back to our hotel with lots of memories to tell about. When we were born, we didn't ask to have what we have now. But orphans are praying just to have the basic things, or half of what we have, and still you will find some people complaining about their life. They haven't met these kids yet, so they have no appreciation for the gifts God gave them. This is something we have to consider.

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Not all the "strangers" are bad. After playingwith these college girls and touching their love, I've changed my concept. Suddenly, the starving feeling that my orphan peers and I had is gone. I've started to understand what that girl told me when she said, " Even if you're rich, that won't make you happy." Maybe food didn't fill me, but love did; and not only for me, but for all the orphans. It seems like the real food we are hungry for is pure love, and to feel beloved by others…which money will never provide us with.

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The events of this story happened in India when Qatar University planned to take four students, including me, to India to help the tsunami orphans and some other orphans too. We went to New Delhi and to Madras (Chennai). We went to the Taj Mahal too, because this is a magnificent historical place you can't miss. I consider this trip a life-changing experience, because it taught me the value of appreciating what God has given us. I have many plans for other trips in the future in different places, to make this world a better place to live in. I will never forget these orphans as long as I live, and one day, I will go back to visit and see in what position life has placed them."
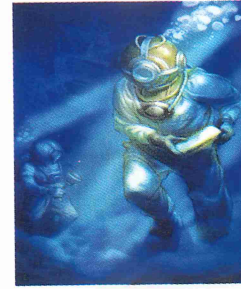
The Humanities Students at the Student Learning Centers
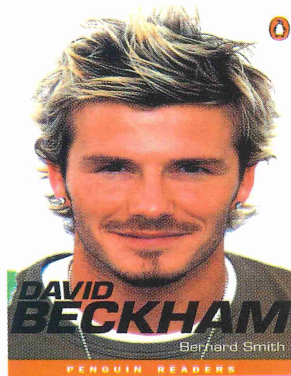### {Fostering Independent Learning in the Student}

Some Interesting Books for Students to Read
(Provided by Allyson Young)
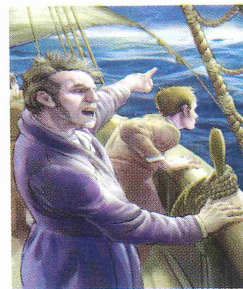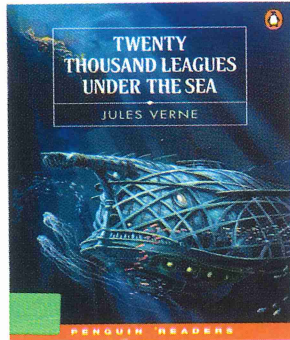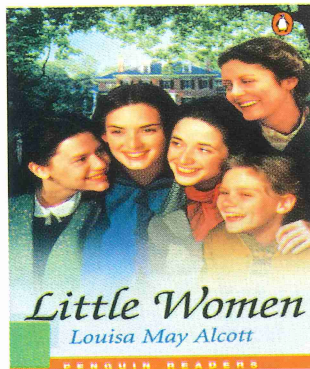
There it is! I can see the giant whale!

They came back with gold in their hands.

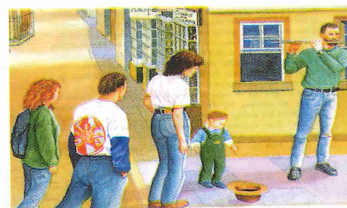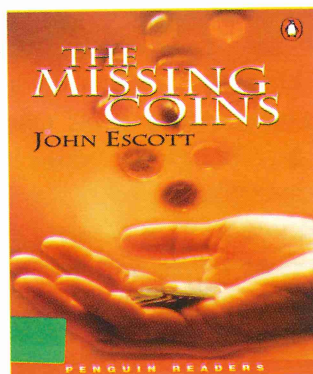David wasn't good at school, but he was good at football

In 2003 David moved to Real Milan.
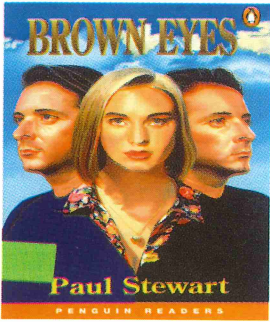
Beth liked the box. She opened it every day.

Jo smiled at her mother, but that night she didn't sleep.

That man is playing the flute. Let's go and listen! Why is he playing here?

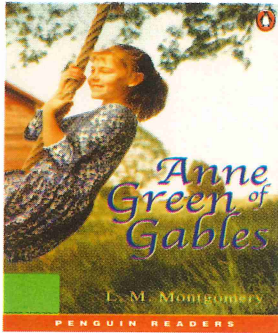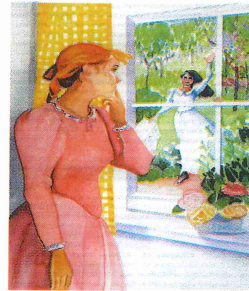The girl and the flute player were clever.

BROWN EYES
Paul Stewart
PENGUIN READERS

He turned and walked quickly away.

Peter's eyes are blue. His are brown.

Susan, come back. He's dangerous.

Anne of Green Gables
L. M. Montgomery
PENGUIN READERS

I hate you!

Your name is in the newspaper!

The Crown
M. R. JAMES
PENGUIN READERS
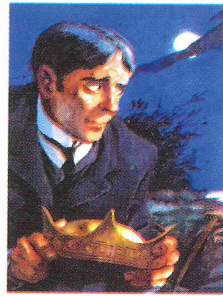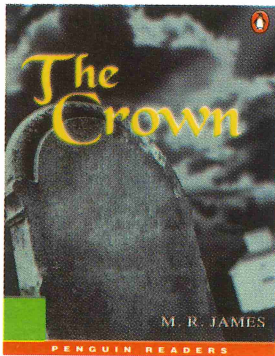
Suddenly, there was a noise behind him again.
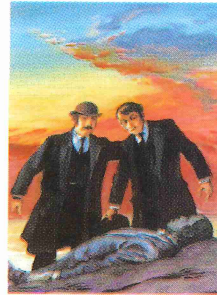
And now Paxton was dead, too.

SIX Sketches
Leslie Dunkling
PENGUIN READERS
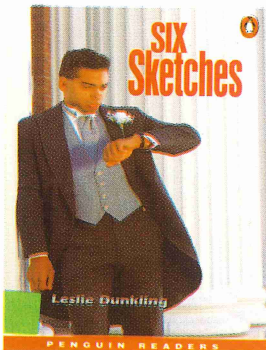
I don't like cheese. I don't eat it.

Now, Mandy, say an English sentence.

MICHAEL JORDAN
NANCY TAYLOR
PENGUIN READERS
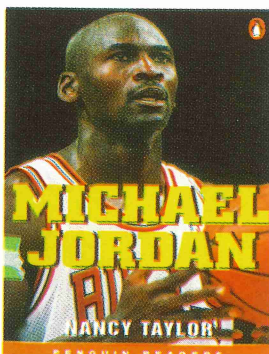
Michael was a quiet boy and a good student.

In 1985 Michael met Juanita and they got married.

Allyson Young
(Student Support Co-ordinator)

Ayman Bakro
(SLC Reading Room Supervisor - Men)

Gigi Cocoli
(SLC Reading Room Supervisor – Women)

# Qatar University Theatre Review: "An Urgent Meeting"

Mrs. Elisabeth Szewczyk, Level 2 Foundation

On Tuesday, 26 December, I had the great privilege to attend the Qatari premier of the play "An Urgent Meeting" written, produced, and dramatised by former Qatar University student, Mr. Ahmed Al Muftah. The playwright says he has always longed to be a director and produce a play at Qatar University and now one part of his dream and ambition has been finally realised. The pinnacle of his dream, says Mr. Al Muftah, would be to one day see Qatar University have its own theatre and drama group and thus give young Qatari students the opportunity to perform live on stage. Mr. Al Muftah has nothing but praise for the young amateur actors who helped him to realise his dream and brought his thought-provoking, culturally perceptive and reflective tragicomedy drama to life.

The one-act play was performed in a small room in the Men's Student Activity Building, temporarily turned into an experimental-type theatre. The stage set by Ali Gloum and Ahmed Al Hamar was simple, but very effective – giant beige puzzle-like pieces which, when locked together, could double as houses and buildings and when separated acted as walls and rooms. Songs by the popular singers Faisal Rasheed and Hassan Al Ahmed echoed both the joys and sorrows of characters' lives, antics, and life-experiences. All of the young men in the cast are Qatar University students, most of whom made their theatrical debut last night. As an avid and regular theatre goer and longstanding member of Doha Players, I was very impressed by their energy, professionalism, ardour and talent. According to the director, the students managed to faithfully attend rehearsals despite having a heavy load of classes, homework and other commitments. Mr. Al Muftah was very impressed by their dedication, hard work and talent.

The play focused on the four very different sons of an elderly Qatari gentleman, played with by Khalid Al Jidi who gave a riveting performance as the sometimes wily and sometimes foolish old father. His four sons were played with great panache by Nasr Nasser Al Kharousi, Ali Al Khalaf, Nasser Sadi and the winsome Abdullah Sabri as the tragic youngest son. Several vignettes focused around the sometimes sad and sometimes hilarious adventures and misadventures of these four youths. But beneath the fun was the darker, more serious theme of some of the difficult issues and challenges facing national families and youth today: marriage and dowry expenses, financial problems, unemployment, nepotism, education and negative social influences. My talented student, Mr. Nasr Nasser, had the role of Rashid, a newly engaged young Qatari youth who has just entangled himself with a very expensive 'mahar' or dowry. One of his brothers, played by enigmatic Nasser Sadi lands in prison because of financial miscalculations. Another brother, played by the engagingly funny Ali Al Khalaf ends up in an ill-fated 'wasta' connected job. The youngest brother, Abdulla Sabri, rejects Qatar University and goes to university abroad where he falls into a life full

of temptation and bad influence. All of the novice actors gave a brilliantly compelling and highly energised performance. The production was a resounding success. Good luck to Mr. Al Mutfah. He has great talent and I hope his dream of having a theatre programme at Qatar University will one day come true. I sincerely hope that this play will be staged again in the Ibn Khaldoun Hall to give many more people, especially Qatar University students, an opportunity to watch this brilliantly produced and acted very contemporary social drama.

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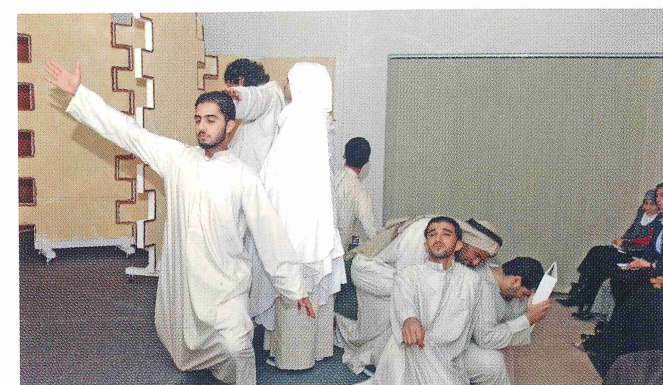
A Letter to the Editor

On 8 October, 2006, I received a message and a letter from our colleague Leslie Butler, suggesting a regular section in the Newsletter on "Teachers' Tips and Experiences." This section, in fact, has been more than often called for in each of the memos I put out requesting contributions for the Newsletter, under the heading: "Teaching Experiences." Leslie has now put this issue in a new and wider perspective, of which the purpose is to see it prioritised. We cannot give Leslie's proposal our divided attention. To open up this practical and far-reaching section, which really doesn't sound like a lot, teachers are urged to write to Leslie so that this section can see the light. (See pages 40/41).

Leslie's Message

Dear Mr. Hussein

I attach a 'letter to the editor for the newsletter.' I know you do welcome the sort of thing I'm talking about, but I'd like to see it prioritised, so this is my way of trying to raise people's awareness of the need to engage with each other.

Best, Leslie Butler

Leslie's Letter

Please can we see a regular section on 'Teachers' Tips and Experiences'? I can think of no more useful a service that the Newsletter could provide.

Teaching is essentially a solitary activity. You don't know what I do in the classroom and, unless you do something sufficiently spectacular to attract the police, I'll never know what you do. That's not a problem, but it is a consideration.

Maybe you've noticed things that work elsewhere but not here. Maybe I've dreamed up a simple game that works surprisingly well with Arab students. Maybe Westerners regularly use expressions or gestures that are, or seem, rude in Qatar, but which students are too embarrassed to mention. That's all useful knowledge which could be shared, but sharing generally doesn't happen because we've better things to talk about in casual conversation.

I think the Newsletter should solicit contributions on actual classroom observations, and prioritise these above all else. I've tried a few such comments in the past, but I'd love to hear others' stories. For example, could any of the Arab teachers warn us Westerners of student remarks or behaviour to watch out for? Or against possible inadvertent discourtesies? Occasionally, with women students, I've had the impression that putting my hands in my pockets has struck them as vulgar; but then teenage girls can giggle at anything, so maybe it was me that was misinterpreting. I would love to get some warning or reassurance from those who know, plus reports on all and any salutary experiences.

My Reply to Leslie

Dear Leslie

Thank you for you 'letter to the editor,' and for your appreciated contributions to the previous issues of the Newsletter.

Your suggestion of a regular section on 'Teachers' Tips and Experiences' is great and a welcome addition to our regular sections. As you might have noticed I have always invited teachers in my memos to write about their teaching experiences, but unfortunately, apart from your writings, I haven't received any response. However, your suggestion puts the issue in new perspective. I would be grateful if you could take charge of this section.

Thanks Leslie

Abdul Moniem

* The ball's in our court now, and I'm sure we have a lot on the ball. So please mull it over and keep the ball rolling. It is 'sine qua non' for our teaching practices.

</div>

Teachers' Tips & Queries

Leslie Butler

Share it!

Teaching is a very solitary activity, if you think about it. You don't know what I do in the classroom and, unless you attract the police, I'll never know what you do. That's a pity, if there are things we could learn from each other.

Besides general issues, maybe you've noticed things that are peculiar to Qatari students, or to non-Qatari teachers. Maybe you've noticed an activity that works surprisingly well, or badly, with Arab learners. Maybe you've noticed, or avoided, or been baffled by an inadvertent insult or breakdown in communication. Or maybe you want to share some general pointers, as in Alicia's useful tips below.

There's a lot of useful knowledge which could be shared, and it seems to me that the Newsletter is the ideal medium for this. Accordingly, AbdulMoniem has allowed me to collate this page of notes and queries. Please, then send me your tips AND questions, so we can think and discuss and learn.

Why won't they do what you ask them to?

Alicia Cundell

1. No matter how simple you think the instruction is, write it on the board. Students who didn't understand or weren't paying attention can read and re-read.

2. Keep a place on the board for the task at hand. For example, I always have a section on the board that says 'Now:' where I write the task they should be doing at the moment. Example: 'Now: Reading p. 45.'

3. Always have something ready for students who finish early to do. Let them get started on the next task or have an extension of the task so they are not distracting other students.

4. You can also use 'Later' to write this next task. Students can refer to the board when they are finished without disturbing other students and stay focused on the lesson as opposed to sending SMSs or doodling. Example: 'Later: Write 5-6 sentences to summarize the story.'

Green Ink is better than Red Ink!

Leslie Butler

I saw a teacher marking a paper with green ink once, and asked him why. Research, he assured me, shows that students are put off by red ink; scarlet scrawls over their work seem bloody and aggressive. Better, then, to use a less violent colour such as green.

I haven't traced the research behind his words, but I knew the guy to be a well-informed professional; and anyway, the advice sounded true and sensible, so I adopted it.

And while I won't say it changed my outlook on life exactly, I do think that avoiding red ink makes for a better attitude in both parties. Not only are the students spared the sight of carnage inflicted on their written work, using a more muted colour prompts me (I think) to engage in dialogue, rather then in rebuke. Try it!

Collins Cobuild Concordance

Leslie Butler

Sometimes the internet takes all the fun out of life. A couple of years ago, I was in an argument about whether a certain spoken expression was normal or not.

It was late at night, so no-one was giving way, until our impatient host produced a computer with an internet connection. Moments later the discussion was over: My favoured expression was not normal, I was embarrassed to find, but an uncommon usage, peculiar to my native shore.

Well, if you're going to beat me in an argument, you'll need all the technological help you can get. Seeing it's Christmas, I'll point you to some now.

If you go to www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx, you'll find something called the Corpus Concordance Sampler. This is a very clever search engine for a data base of 56 million written and spoken words of authentic British and American English, collated jointly by Collins the Publishers and the University of Birmingham, England, (who actually have a much larger data base of over 450 million words, known as the Bank of English, accessible through another search engine called 'Titania'.) This body or 'corpus' of language is the basis of the Collins Cobuild Dictionary, of course, and the most important resource in the field of Corpus Linguistics, the investigation of living English, as opposed to (purely) theoretical or historically based studies. The primary meaning of 'see', Corpus Linguistics discovered, is 'understand', not 'observe visually'. See: bowland-files.lancs.ac.uk/monkey/ihe/linguistics/contents.htm, if you don't know about this already.

I won't waste Newsletter space telling you how to use Concordance Sampler, because there are instructions on the page, and an excellent on-line tutorial at

http://web.quick.cz/jaedth/Introduction%20to%20CCS.htm, besides the University of Birmingham's site at http://www.titania.bham.ac.uk/, (when it's working).

What I do want to tell you is how useful the Cobuild Concordance is for verifying language. Suppose you're preparing a reading or test. You're trying so hard to illustrate key grammar or lexis, that your resulting sentence seems a bit odd. Is it proper English? It's late, you're tired, and your head's so full of target language that you've forgotten what the real thing looks like. Well, help is at hand! Simply key the suspect phrase into the

corpus sampler, and see if it matches anything. If you get your maximum free quota of forty samples, you know all is well. If you get "no matches", well maybe what you wrote shouldn't be inflicted on impressionable young minds. It's a good idea to apply the same test to those superficially accessible texts that float around the internet. Many of them are archaically irregular, when analysed, and shouldn't be used without careful re-editing.

Me, I amuse myself by checking the oddities I find in certain text books. Thanks to Cobuild, I can confirm my suspicion that ferries do not go to "docks", and that expressions like "no weights no worries" are indeed too rare to be worth presenting. Sometimes, though, as with the argument described above, I find it's me that's wrong. Which is what life-long-learning is all about, and why tools like the Collins Cobuild Concordance are so valuable.

ESP in Brief:
The Origins of English for Special Purposes

Ali Ahmed Hussein

" Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need"

Born in the early 1960's as a result of converging factors, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) emerged as a branch of ELT. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) outlined the following three main reasons behind the emergence of ESP as an autonomous discipline:

1.The Demands of a New World

The end of World War Two witnessed an enormous expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity worldwide,which the impact of that was to create a whole new mass of people wanting to learn English not for the prestige of knowing a foreign language, but because English became the accepted international language for science and technology and many other genre-specific disciplines such as medicine, engineering ..etc and, so, "Whereas English previously decided its own destiny, it now became subject to the wishes, needs and demands of people other than language teachers."

2. A Revolution in Linguistics

With the emergence of ESP, the aim of Linguistics shifted from defining the formal features of language and describing the rules of usage (Grammar) to discovering ways in which language is actually used in real communication (Widdowson, 1978). As a result, the late 1960's and early 1970's witnessed the greatest expansion of research into the nature of varieties of English, for example description of Scientific English (1985), English for Science and Technology (Selinker and Trimble (1976) and many others. The trend became that the English needed by a particular group of learners can be identified by analyzing the linguistic features of their special area.

3. Focus on the Learner

Learners were seen to have different needs and interests which have a very important impact on their motivation and, ultimately, the effectiveness of their learning. Thus ESP courses are characterized by their relevance to the learners' needs and aspirations

B. Distinctive Features of ESP

One may probably raise the question of how does ESP differ from general English (GE)?? The following features may distinguish ESP from general English:

1.The Concept of Register Analysis

This is associated with the work of Halliday McIntosh and Peter Strevens (1964), and John Swales (1971), and operates on the principle that the English of Biology, for example, has grammatical and lexical features that differ from General English features as those of other registers as well.

2. Beyond the Sentence: Discourse Analysis and Rhetorical Functions

Register analysis focused on sentence grammar but, subsequently in ESP, attention moved to understanding how sentences are combined in discourse to build meaningful units, so the concern is to identify organizational patterns in texts and to specify the linguistic devices by which these patterns are signaled

3. Learner-Centred Approach (Needs Analysis)

ESP focuses on learners' needs and motivation to learn. As such, any ESP course will not be effective unless it is based on subtle analysis of the needs of the target group of learners.

4. Team Teaching

Unlike general English, ESP is taught cooperatively and collaboratively by a team that is formed from the English teacher and the subject specialist as proposed by some ESP practitioners in the mid 1980's such as Tony Dudley Evans.

Reference:

Hutchinson, T., &Waters, A.(1987) English for Specific Purposes. Cambridge University Press

MAINTAINING LOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CRITICAL THINKING IN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

Maintaining Logical Relationships and Critical Thinking

James Moody

Department of Foreign Languages

The University of Qatar

Besides mastering the principles of spelling, punctuation and grammar, learning how to organize ideas logically is probably the most important writing skill students need to acquire. This is especially important in academic writing, which requires taking a position and justifying it in the light of opposing evidence. In this kind of discourse, writers are less concerned with reporting what they observe (as in other genres such as descriptions, narratives and process essays) than with developing and analyzing what they think. There is a sense in which ideas exist only in relation to other ideas, and learning how to negotiate different opinions and attitudes in a logical "reasonable" manner is crucial in achieving competence in argumentative writing. I would like to consider here some principles I have tried to implement in teaching argumentative writing, based on examples of work produced in class. My assumption is that students learn best when teaching grows out of what they actually do rather than what they should be doing.

The topic of an argumentative essay needs to be carefully chosen. It should be a statement about something; otherwise, there are no grounds for argument. "Fast food" and "The internet" are subjects, but they are not propositions. The topic may be a declarative sentence ("Children should not eat fast food"), or a yes-no question ("Should university students do research on the internet?"), or an alternative question ("Is the internet a better way of doing research than using the library?"). The topic must express an arguable opinion, not a matter of fact (not, e.g., "Are women allowed to work in Arab countries?"). Often, as here, the difference between an appropriate and inappropriate topic involves the use of a modal verb (substituting should be for are). In addition, the topic should not be concerned with personal preferences or matters of religious faith ("Should a man have more than one wife?", "Should abortion be legal?") since they are matters of belief and do not permit the writer to entertain reasons supporting the opposing side. Writers should genuinely see that there are two sides of the topic they choose; students often discover that they begin by supporting one side but after analysis find themselves on the other side. This is a positive development in promoting critical thinking. Finally, and most importantly, it must be clear to the writer what is required of the discussion that the topic will generate. For example, "Should parents beat their children?" means always, even for no reason, without some qualifier such as "...when they misbehave". "Children should learn English in primary school" (compulsion) involves a different set of arguments from "Children should be allowed to learn English in primary school" (option). "Is the internet the best way to get information?" entails examining other possible ways. If topics are chosen without regard to their implications, then organizing the points on each side becomes difficult or impossible, and sometimes students have had to reword their topic once they begin to see what it really means.

Making a plan in outline form is the most crucial part of the writing exercise. A plan is necessary because it can conveniently be revised, reworked, added to, rearranged, etc., whereas it is very difficult and time consuming to rewrite an entire essay once it has been written. Writing teachers stress that an essay should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion, but the kind of information to include in each part needs to be spelled out for each discourse type. In an argument, the introduction should clarify the topic and explain or define terms; for example, in "Should children be beaten by parents when they misbehave?" between what ages are the children, where should they be beaten (hands, bottom, face?). The limitation of the discussion should also be made clear: children and parents in Qatar? Another kind of information that the introduction can include is a brief account of the current situation (based on statistics or facts or even just personal observation) and a statement about the history or significance of the topic and/or why it is worth discussing. Some textbooks recommend that the thesis statement (including the writer's final conclusion) be given in the introduction, on the grounds that it lets the reader know where the discussion is headed. I suggest though that in an argumentative essay the thesis statement come in the conclusion, as this provides a more mimetic form of expression; if it appears in the introduction, the reader has the impression that a decision about which side is stronger has been made before the evidence has been marshaled.

There are two ways to organize the body of an argumentative essay. One student, using the topic about beating children, did it like this:

1. Points for	2. Points against
A. Child learns right from wrong	A. Causes pain and perhaps injury
B. More peace in the home	B. Parents feel guilty
C. Possibility that adult becomes more responsible	C. Possibility that adult becomes violent

When the plan was scrutinized, however, she and the teacher came up with a more interesting way of structuring the same information.

1. From child's perspective
    A. For: learns right from wrong
    B. Against: feels pain, injury
2. From parents' perspective
    A. For: peace in the home
    B. Against: feelings of guilt
3. From society's perspective
    A: For: possibility of disciplined adults
    B. Against: possibility of violent adults

Now not all plans will lend themselves to such a neat rearrangement, but most can benefit from further analysis, and new levels of analysis can be added in doing so.

The conclusion is the only place in the discussion where the writer overtly asserts her own opinion. Of course she may have given her personal views in the body, but she has presented them along with the opposition and offered no judgment of either side. The conclusion is in some ways the most difficult part of the essay with regard to maintaining logic, for here points on both sides need to be compared and weighed against each other through considering the evidence. Some students believe that all they need to do is state their own opinion, but the writer has to convince the reader that this opinion is valid. No new reasons on either side should be given here; the conclusion is the place for analysis, not for the introduction of new information or evidence. A good conclusion also rounds off the essay by referring back to the introduction. One way this can be done is to make recommendations concerning the status quo, which has been considered in the introduction: should things change or stay the same with regard to present practice? There are two main possible types of conclusion: one side or the other can be accepted entirely, or, more subtly, one side can be accepted with qualifications or conditions: e.g., "Children in Qatar should be beaten by parents when they misbehave as long as they are hit on the palms of their hands and nowhere else." Sometimes students think that reaching a conclusion involves accepting or rejecting one side in toto; it needs to be explained that this is not necessarily the case.

Maintaining logical coherence between points in an argument is part of the contract between reader and writer in an argumentative essay, and it can be another source of difficulty. One strategy I have used is to have students formulate their main points into because sentences about the topic. For instance, "Boys should be able to get a driver's license at the age of 18 in Qatar because some families do not like strangers living in the house." This sentence in itself seems to flout Grice's maxim of relevance. From looking at her point expressed in this way, the student realized she needed to explain that if boys in the family are not able to drive, the family may have to employ a male driver who lives in the house. Another student produced the following plan for the topic "Should teachers in Qatar use Arabic in English classes?"

YES	NO
1. Arabic can be used to define new vocabulary	1. Students won't be able to use English fluently.
2. Using Arabic is helpful in learning English.	2. Students will be poor in English.
3. Using Arabic saves time	3. Learning will not be promoted

Because the points were laid out in a plan, it was a fairly easy matter to show the repetitions and inconsistencies in logic here. Point 2 under YES is an example of Point 1. Point 1 under NO is saying the same thing as Point 3. Point 2 under YES contradicts Point 2 under NO (unless it is pointed out that although some English words may be explained in Arabic, overall fewer English words will be used). And all three points on both sides are at different levels of abstraction.

Through writing argumentative essays, students develop the ability to judge the strength of the arguments of others and to produce rational and valid opinions of their own. This kind of writing teaches them that understanding, explanation and analysis must precede judgment. Moreover, it is a means of empowerment within their discourse community, for it contributes to the construction of a new reality. The novelist Paul Auster puts this idea succinctly:

"We live in the present, but the future is inside us at every moment. Maybe that's what writing is all about,… not recording events from the past but making things happen in the future." (Oracle Nights, 2004: 222)

(Note: This article is a summary of a paper given at the International Conference of the Science and Art of Language Teaching, on "Change: Bridging Theory and Practice" in Penang, Malaysia, 20-22 November 2006.)

'Professional' Vs. 'Personal' ELT Material

Dr. Ahmed AbdAlla Mohammed

The production line of designing ELT material, particularly commercial publications, usually ends up with a prescribed document, a textbook, into the hands of the students, (the stakeholders). A few points of concern to note here, in brief, would be:

a) The stages prior to the final product (the textbook) are never disclosed, and so, it is not clear what language analysis was carried out in the first place to identify, for instance, consumers' level of English, nor is it known how the content is decided upon and selected, let alone who the clients of the material might be!!

b) The design of textbooks indicates that the preconception of materials writers is to offer a full-fledged set of non-negotiable material, ready for consumption, often (even implicitly), from cover to cover.

c) More serious, though, is the tight space of freedom allowed for the students to bring their own experiences to the classroom, including: their personal life, ways of thinking, knowledge of language and that of the world at large. The design of material as such, i.e. whole textbook's dependency, a predominant feature of published materials, is labeled in this article: 'Professional' ELT material.

The major shortcoming of such material is that it generally puts more weight on language practice per se than on that of engaging the students' personalities. Obviously, a representative language practice to the reality of the student provides an impetus to the learning process as a whole since it positively takes into account both the presupposed knowledge of the student, schemata (Carrel 1983), and the purposeful use of English, as opposed to language drills, (Widdowson 1990). The inclusion of life experience as an essential part of ELT materials is labeled in this article: 'Personal' material.

The article calls, as its focal point, for redressing the balance between language practice, such as that found in textbooks, and widening the room for the students' input to find inroads into the ELT classroom activities.

The rationale underlying linking language to self knowledge is to relate the purpose of studying English directly to the interests of the students, i.e. drawing from their own experience would make language meaningful (Personal/less formal); ironing out, at the same time, the norms of the textbook structural language practice (Professional/formal). Furthermore, the students are expected to feel as belonging more to personal material than to the (imposed?) professional type of material. The primary concern of learning would turn into expressing themselves genuinely, (as opposed to pretending to do so in formal language exercises).

The ways of applying personal material in ELT classroom presentations are fairly open, and could, in sum, be realized in looking for opportunities whenever possible, to maximize students' input, even within the main stream of professional practice.

Generally speaking, the experience of the student in all walks of life, without the need for exemplification here, marks the ingredients of using language, and so, it can maximally be utilized in all appropriate ELT classroom events. In effect, learning the language would turn to expressing something of value for the students since it emerges from within their own ideas, interests, activities and/or whatever type of self knowledge at their disposal. The students feel reasonably allowed to share in drawing the atmosphere of their studying English. This is probably applicable across the entire spectrum of the language components. First the students' input, then the matching language.

Suffice it to cite here one example in illustration, borrowing Anderson's ACTIVE framework of reading (2005), where the brainstorming (prior thinking) in reading texts could be expanded in preparation to the reading text as follows: students are asked to respond to each statement given twice, (Table 1 below); once before the reading and again after reading. This could go with a single sub-point each

Response before	Topic:...	After reading

Table 1: Anticipation Guide, (topic ....)

time or for the entire reading text, depending upon the teacher's prepared points, type of content and choice of methodology.

Unlike Anderson, who used the above frame for a particular reading text as an example, the topic is not stated in Table 1 above, assuming that the framework is valid to accommodate a wider range of topics. The teacher is to fill in the topic and provide relative supporting points in the mid column (number of rows decided upon supporting points shown) to trigger the students' thinking in English and to allow them a purpose (and challenge!) in checking their own previous knowledge to the information the text presents. The aim is to allow the students to display ways of thinking; though, both the selection and the level of the reading text considerably count in this respect.

It might be argued that textbooks may provied similar practice, but that it is both sporadic and not so profound as to engage the student to cover the entire text.

Finally, the focus of the present article is a call towards bringing closer the students' personality to the language practice presented in the English classes. This should –in no way- conflict with the main syllabus prescribed, nor with supplementing it; it is rather a call for a strong bond between the students personality and their background knowledge, using the language in order to strengthen the pace and enrich the quality of learning English.

References:

Anderson, Neil J., (2005): Improving Fluency in L2 Reading, in Proceedings of the Fifth ELT Conference, The Language Center, Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman.

Carrel, Patricia, (1983): Schemata in Language Learning, OUP.

Widdowson, Henry George, (1990): Aspects of Language Learning, OUP.

Strategies for Practicing Oral Presentations

Dr. Mohammad Fawzi M. Mohammad

Students in course 811201-1 are always advised by their teachers to practice giving their oral presentations before the actual delivery. Some of these students do not follow their teachers' advice, assuming that they know what to say when they are standing in front of the listeners. Many others would follow their teachers' advice, but they are still unable to deliver their message in a convincing way. One of the reasons behind this, as I believe, is that they do not follow the right methods for rehearsal Here are some strategies for rehearsing, which have helped many of my students to overcome this problem.

1. Practice the presentation in front of other students. They can help you identify weak points in the presentation and make suggestions for improvement.

2. Practice the presentation with your visual aids. This will give you the opportunity to coordinate your visual aids with your talk, and will also give you the chance to mention all the important details of your visuals.

3. Pay attention to the delivery of the main points in the presentation. These are the points where stumbling can cause the greatest problems. Therefore, creating an outline of the key points will help a lot in organizing the talk.

4. Make sure that you cover the required time and that you speak at the same pace you will use in the actual presentation.

In short, the above suggestions have helped a lot of the 811201-1 students to rehearse their oral presentations successfully, and this in turn, had positive effects on their actual presentation.

ELT Professionals: Language Models or Learner Models?

Dr. Kourosh Lachini

Purpose

The purpose of this brief article is to favor neither the native speaker teachers of English nor the nonnative speaker ones. The author is committed to the belief that because of the reasons discussed here, we need both groups to work together in any English Language Teaching (ELT) institution since if native speakers are very good 'language models', non-native speaker teachers in return, are very good 'learner models' (Medgyes, 1996). Hence, an attempt is made here to argue that if native and nonnative-English-speaking teachers collaborate with each other, focus on and share their particular strengths, address various teaching issues – discuss problems in second language learning, reflect on their own development and teaching practices, share teaching ideas and information, and provide moral support for each other, they will grow professionally both as individuals and as a group.
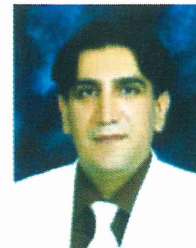
To dichotomize or not to dichotomize?

In the field of ELT, a growing number of teachers are not native speakers of English. "Today, eighty percent of ELT professionals worldwide are bilingual users of English." (Canagarjah 1999, form McKay 2002, 41-2). Some research findings point to a dichotomous distinction between native and non-native foreign language teachers that is manifested in their pedagogical perceptions. Others reject this distinction and the relevance of the native background to teacher's perceptions. Yet, these studies failed to examine the effect of additional personal and professional background variables on the teachers' perceptions. The term nonnative-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) has created a division among professionals in the ELT profession. Supporters of the term believe that it is necessary to distinguish between native- and nonnative-English-speaking-teachers because their differences are, in fact, their strengths and should be recognized. Those who oppose the dichotomy feel that differentiating among teachers based on their status as native or nonnative speakers perpetuates the dominance of the native speaker in the ELT profession and contributes to discrimination in hiring practices. This group seem to disregard the fact that the goal of English learning is not the attainment of native proficiency. For most learners, the ultimate aim is an effective use of English (Paikeday, 1985).

Who is an ideal teacher of English?

Native English speakers without teaching qualifications are more likely to be hired as ESL teachers than qualified and experienced NNESTs, especially outside the United States (Amin, 2000; Braine, 1999; Canangarajah, 1999; Rampton, 1996). But many in the profession argue that teaching credentials should be required of all English teachers, regardless of their native language (Nayar, 1994; Philipson, 1996). Philipson (1996) uses the phrase 'the native speaker fallacy' to refer to unfair treatment of qualified NNESTs. The term was coined as a reaction to the tenet created at the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Makarere, Uganda, which stated that the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker. There is no doubt that native speakers of a language have a feel for its nuances, are comfortable using its idiomatic expressions, and speak it fluently. However, the Makarere tenet is flawed: People do not become

qualified to teach English merely because it is their mother tongue, and much of the knowledge that native speakers bring intrinsically to the ESL classroom can be learned by NNESTs through teacher training. Phillopson (1996), for example, points out that nonnative speakers can learn to use idioms appropriately, to appreciate the cultural connotations of the language, and to determine whether a given language form is correct. In addition, there are many ways in which nonnative teachers are at an advantage in teaching English.

Phillipson (1996) considers NNESTs to be potentially the ideal ESL teachers because they have gone through the process of acquiring English as an additional language. They have first hand experience in learning and using a second language, and their personal experience has sensitized them to the linguistic and cultural needs of their students. Many NNESTs, especially those who have the same first language as their students, have developed a keen awareness of the differences between English and their students' mother tongue. This sensitivity gives them the ability to anticipate their students' linguistic problems.

Strengths of nonnative speaker teachers

Medgyes (1996) conducted a survey of native-speaking-English teachers and NNESTs working in ten countries to determine their success in teaching English. He concluded that the two groups had an equal chance of success as English teachers and that the only area in which the NNESTs seemed to be less qualified – English language proficiency – was also one that gave them a certain advantage over native speakers. As compared to their native-speaking colleagues who can be good language models, NNESTs have gone through the experience of learning English as second (or third or fourth) language. They have had to adopt language-learning strategies during their own learning process, most likely making them better qualified to teach those strategies and more empathetic to their students' linguistic challenges and needs.

The advantages of bilingual teachers /nonnative English speaking teachers

Medgayes (1992) believes that nonnative speaker teachers;

- can serve as imitable models of the successful learner of English.

- can teach learning strategies more effectively.

- can provide learners with more information about the English language.

- are more able to anticipate language difficulties.

- can benefit from sharing the learners' mother tongue.

Conclusion

Despite their many challenges, NNESTs are beginning to see themselves and to be viewed by others as equal partners in the ELT profession, both in the institutions where they teach and within the professional organizations that represent them. In 1998, TESOL approved the formation of the NNEST Caucus. This recognition has given nonnative teachers more visibility in the profession and has helped create a professional environment for all TESOL members, regardless of native language and place of birth.

Qualified and trained NNESTs can contribute in meaningful ways to the field of English language education by virtue of their own experiences as English language learners and their training and experience as teachers. Recent efforts, including research addressing the issue, the development of innovative curricula in teacher training programs, and collaborative efforts between native and nonnative-English-speaking teachers are helping to give NNESTs a voice in their profession and to recognize their position as equal partners in the field of ELT.

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Internet Blogging on Language and Linguistics

By Mark Heyne

As some of you may know, for some time I have been distributing articles and items from the Internet on language and linguistics–related matters, in the belief that awareness of public events when language issues come to the fore is helpful to us as professionals in the language business. With our common backgrounds in Linguistics and Language teaching, I assume we share some knowledge without which these articles would be neither comprehensible, interesting, nor in some cases even humorous. I have avoided academic matters, such as the

proceedings of Linguistics Associations or professional quarrels on technical matters, and prefer to think that language naturally manifests itself as a central concern in everyday contexts. Nevertheless, as no selection or choice of materials is entirely objective or transparent, and every editor has a personal axe to grind, you may notice my highlighting certain issues among which the futility of teaching grammar, the fallacy of the Whorf-Sapir Hypothesis in which language limits what we can see and say, and various other somewhat less pernicious memes that abound in the media.

The teaching of grammar

This traditional approach to language study has recently become newsworthy, with the French government imposing the study of grammar in public schools since "Giving pupils greater mastery of grammar could help prevent outbreaks of violence"

This article from the **Times Educational Supplement** lays out the facts.

"Teaching grammar could stop mob violence."

Giving pupils greater mastery of grammar could help prevent outbreaks of violence, the Education Minister in France has decided.

The announcement follows last year's riots in Paris, when thousands of cars were torched and policemen attacked. Mr. de Robien said improving the way pupils were taught grammar could avert violence, if disputes could be settled by reasoned argument.

He said: "In problem areas, where I often go, when young people have difficulty expressing themselves the tone can rise quickly."

Mr. de Robien has ordered that from next autumn teachers should devote a set amount of time, probably at least two hours a week, to teaching grammar. "One thinks of a basic labeling of words - adjectives, verbs, pronouns, articles, and so on - as if grammar only served to cut up the language, to break up its unity. That's not at all the point of teaching grammar. Knowledge of grammatical rules is not a constraint. It's an instrument for mastering language. So it is an instrument of freedom."

The French Government's position has been greeted with some derision in the linguistic community for the assumptions underlying this move. At Language Log, linguistics professor Heidi Harley comments:

"The report claims that an explicit understanding of the mechanisms of grammar facilitates learning to read, communicative effectiveness, and literary study and appreciation. To justify this kind of assertion, the authors of the report should be citing pedagogical studies contrasting the reading test scores of children who had two hours of grammatical instruction per week with the scores of children who spent those two hours in practicing their reading and writing straight up. The report doesn't cite any such evidence, and as far as I know, no research has been done that would support this kind of claim. All the verbiage about the importance of grammatical instruction is subject to refutation if its functional benefit to the student is presented as the main justification. (The argument is analogous to saying that to be a competent musician, several years of explicit study of music theory is essential -- it could help, perhaps, but it's clearly not essential.)"

At another blog, The Web of Language, resident linguist Dennis Baron said :

" ...and while the **Washington Post** recently reported that grammar was starting to reappear in American classrooms, the U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings told the annual conference of the National Council of Teachers of English meeting in Nashville that grammar was dropped from the American school curriculum early in the 20th century because teachers, not students, found it too difficult to understand.

"Bring formal grammar back to the classroom," she predicted, "and you'll have angry mobs of teachers overturning cars in the parking lot and torching them."

To underscore how un-American grammar really is, Spellings reminded her audience that when Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez waved a copy of Noam Chomsky's **Aspects of the Theory of Syntax** in a recent United Nations speech protesting American Middle East policy, the very next day the 1965 grammar book shot to the top of the charts at Amazon.com. "Those grammarians hate freedom," she concluded.

British Premier Tony Blair reluctantly admitted that the French might be on to something: "Give the enemy a good dose of grammar," he told a BBC interviewer, "and they'll go right to sleep."

Whorf-Whorf!

This is a hardy perennial, the idea that the language you speak limits the view you have of the world. When I first heard of Benjamin Whorf's idea, I immediately thought of Orwell's Newspeak in his novel **1984,** by which the government of Big Brother limits the vocabulary of its citizens in order to limit their thinking.

"By 2050—earlier, probably—all real knowledge of Oldspeak will have disappeared. The whole literature of the past will have been destroyed. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron—they'll exist only in Newspeak versions, not merely changed into something different, but actually contradictory of what they used to be. Even the literature of the Party will change. Even the slogans will change. How could you have a slogan like "freedom is slavery" when the concept of freedom has been abolished? The whole climate of thought will be different. In fact there will be no thought, as we understand it now. Orthodoxy means not thinking—not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness."

It is a pernicious idea, and one that even the great Wittgenstein endorsed in saying "the limits of my language are the limits of my world." Fortunately, there are calm heads out there on the Web who rubbish the idea quite convincingly. Says Geoffrey K. Pullum at Language Log, "I tell you, this continual harping on the 'no word for it in their language' meme strikes me as one of the two most irrational features of everyday attitudes to language."

The "NO WORD FOR X" fallacy.

A particularly damaging example of the "No word for X" fallacy is one that one hears here in Northwestern Canada. Many of the Athabascan languages of Canada have a word for "thank you" that is borrowed from French "merci." In Carrier it is [m_si]. This fact has suggested to the ignorant that these languages previously had no word for "thank

you," from which they draw the further conclusion that their speakers had no concept of gratitude. Such a people, of course, must have been sub-human savages. The conclusion is that it's a good thing that white people came to rescue them from their degraded traditional way of life. This claim is so well known that it figured in an episode of the television program North of 60, which was set in a Slave village in the Northwest Territories. The fact is that the loan was not motivated by the lack of a native way to say "thank you." In Carrier, there are actually two different verbs for expressing thanks, one for giving thanks for what someone has said, the other for giving thanks for what someone has done. Both verbs are conjugated for both the subject (the one thanked) and the object (the one giving thanks).

The reason that the subject is the one thanked is that these verbs literally mean something like "you have done me a favour." Far from lacking a way of saying "thank you," Carrier had, and has, a more highly articulated, finer-grained way of doing so than English or French. The loan from French is used for relatively casual thanks, and increasingly by semi-speakers and non-speakers, but truly fluent speakers still use the traditional verbs when seriously expressing gratitude. [Bill Poser at Language Log, May 6, 2006]

The Universal Language of Babies.

Finally, in a lighter vein, the Oprah Winfrey show recently featured a woman who claimed to have discovered the "International Language of Babies." Quite unironically, Oprah publicised the claims of this woman to millions of viewers worldwide, perpetuating what at another time of the year would surely be taken for an April Fool's prank.

"After eight years of research, Australian mother Priscilla Dunstan says she has discovered a universal baby language, comprised of five distinct sounds. Dunstan says babies produce the different sounds depending on their needs. 'Neh' means the child is hungry, while 'owh' indicates he or she is tired. Other sounds include 'eh', 'eairh' and 'heh', which mean the infant needs burping, has wind or is uncomfortable. Dunstan says babies make these sounds during the "pre-cry stage" - before they start crying hysterically - thus, parents who learn to identify the noises should be able to reduce the frequency of screaming outbursts. Dunstan, who has always had a sharp listening skills, identified the five key sounds after spending hours listening to her own son and other infants. She has since developed and released a Dunstan Baby Language DVD, which is available in Australia, America and is soon-to-be released in Britain."

Mark Liberman at Language Log comments:

"I'm especially suspicious when the new theories are described only in vague terms, and no evidence is offered other than even vaguer mentions of large numbers of satisfied customers, and references to authoritative places where unspecified research might have been done. Priscilla Dunstan's theory about the secret language of babies, documented on Oprah ("Amazing Medical Breakthroughs: The Secret Language of Babies Video") and available to parents and other interested parties in a 2-DVD set for $59.95, starts out with all of these handicaps. That doesn't

mean that it's wrong. Time will tell. But as I'll explain below, I think that even if it's nonsense, it's probably beneficent nonsense.

Anyway, Liberman continues, The Simpsons cartoon has already explored this area of science in episode 8F23, Brother, Can You Spare Two Dimes?:

Herb stands in a public park trying to figure out an idea, when a woman struggles to understand what her baby's trying to tell her.

Herb: [confronting her] Lady, you just gave me the idea of a lifetime! How do I thank you?

Lady: Please don't hurt me.

Herb: Consider it done.

Herb invites the family in for a presentation that will change the world, and brings out a drinking bird. Homer is in awe. Herb tells him to take it easy, but Homer continues to ogle the bird. Herb introduces his true plan: a baby translator.

It measures the pitch, the frequency, and the urgency of a baby's cry, and then tells whoever's around, in plain English, exactly what the baby's trying to say! Everything from "Change me" to "Turn off that damn Raffi record!"

He reveals his less-than-spectacular creation. Marge "oooh"s.   Herb says "You don't have to humor me", but she retorts that it's pretty ingrained.

Homer says it's the stupidest thing he ever saw. [...]

Just then Maggie reveals its ability.

" Lavish attention on me, and entertain me."

Everyone is in awe. Lisa plays peekaboo with her.

Lisa: Maggie? Maggie? [covers her eyes]

Maggie: [babbles]

Translator: [monotone] Where did you go?

Lisa: Peekaboo! [uncovers eyes]

Maggie: [laughs]

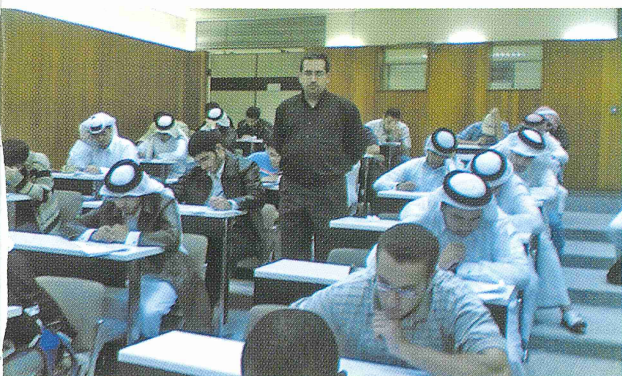Translator: [monotone] Oh, there you are. Very amusing.

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