

FP Jareeda

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Welcome to Issue 29

Mondher Chaabane, Chair of the Foundation Program's Newsletter Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Welcome to issue 29 of the Foundation Program's newsletter, FP Jareeda.

In this edition, you will read about various events organized by the Students' Affairs Office namely AI-Qabas Program, the Career Development Day and Moments from Summer Photography Competition. You will also read a press release about Qatar University 8th International Conference on English Language Teaching as well as articles related to the English Business course. These include mainly the Foundation Program

Showcase Event and the associated award ceremony.

One of the special highlights of this edition is the interview with Dr. Robabeh Safari on the recent completion of her PhD thesis. In addition, you will find an interesting article about the event "Math and English skills for a Successful Engineer" which was jointly organized by the Math and English Success Zones. Finally, Paul Ames has written an academic article about elicitation in language learning and teaching.

We hope that you will enjoy reading our latest newsletter.



Dr. Mondher Chaabane: Photograph courtesy of Mondher Chaabane

AI-Qabas Program Fall 2023

Hayat El Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, Foundation Program

Under the theme "For a Successful University Experience," the Foundation Program (FP), under the Deanship of General Studies and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE), launched the 6th edition of AI-Qabas Program.

The event took place on November 6th and 7th, 2023 and 357 high school students from 39 schools participated in the program.



High school students participating in AI-Qabas Program: Photograph courtesy of Mosa Aljumat

Al-Qabas program educates high school students from grades 10 and 11 about university life. It focuses mainly on the skills required to succeed in university studies, and targets the improvement of students' English and math skills to enhance their successful enrollment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and health majors at Qatar University. It also showcases QU's learning environment to attract students. The participating students and their academic advisors attended various sessions. In one of the sessions which is entitled "Brainiac", students practiced English and critical thinking skills. In another session, "Let's Design a Useful Mobile App", students were asked to brainstorm ideas about their own useful mobile app to simulate the work environment.

Testing strategies were emphasized throughout Al-Qabas Program. The participants received links to sample math and English tests prior to their campus visit. On arrival, they attended sessions about test-taking strategies for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), American College Testing (ACT), Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and QU placement tests. Dr. Walid Massoud, Head of Qatar University Testing Center, and Dr. Mohammad Ejbara, Psychometrician and Test Development Specialist, talked about different international exams and placement tests required for successful enrollment in STEM and the health sectors.

Al-Qabas Program 2023 presenters were able to create active and engaging sessions. An academic advisor from Simaisma Secondary School for Boys wrote: "attended the program with my school's students, and the program was excellent and beneficial. The sessions that covered standardized tests, relevant test strategies, and sample questions were very helpful. Also, the students practiced critical thinking and creative thinking skills. The program is excellent, and we hope that the students can transfer the knowledge they gained from Al-Qabas into success stories by achieving high scores in standardized tests."

The student survey showed a high satisfaction rate among students regarding how much they benefited from the sessions. A student wrote the following: "The program was beneficial on a personal level with useful activities and wonderful ideas. I suggest increasing the number of sessions." Another student said that "Al-Qabas provided a rich experience for students; it answered many questions that students had about universities and exams. It included comprehensive explanation regarding the university requirements that aids in planning for university life." Another student wrote: "I've always been so confused and lost about how to get accepted but this program was of huge help. I sincerely appreciate it. Thank you for your hard work. I am looking forward to be in Qatar University."



Ryan Brendzy monitoring groups of students during a workshop: Photograph courtesy of Mosa Aljumat



Osama Elhafy presenting ACT and SAT tests: Photograph courtesy of Mosa Aljumat

Since its launch in April 2019, the Al-Qabas Program has undergone numerous changes and has been delivered in various formats. In April 2019 and 2020, the Al-Qabas Program was organized on campus, bringing students together for five days. In addition to its current topics, it includes college and class visits, and a Poster Showcase prepared by the participating students. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Al-Qabas Program transitioned to a virtual format in June 2021. Subsequently, in November 2022, a hybrid approach was adopted by scheduling concurrent virtual and on-campus sessions. Whether it is face-to-face or online, Al-Qabas Program remains dedicated to bridging the gap between school and university life, thereby contributing to the wider Qatari community, and enhancing student success.

Qatar University 8th Annual International Conference on ELT

Okon Effiong, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Qatar University (QU) held its 8th Annual International Conference on English Language Teaching, entitled “Multimodal ELT Pedagogy: Curriculum, Assessment, and Technology” from 4 to 5 November, 2023.

Due to the pandemic, the Qatar University International Conference shifted to an online format in the past three years, reaching thousands of English language practitioners from around the world who participated as attendees or presenters. During this period, the conference strengthened its international status and expanded its reach to the wider international ELT community. To keep serving those who are geographically far from the region or cannot attend physically, the Foundation Program, under the Deanship of General Studies, decided to host a hybrid edition with the first day on campus and the second day virtually. Both the in-person and virtual formats were a success, with the on-campus sessions drawing around 365 participants and the virtual ones attracting over 1200 attendees from over 32 countries.

This year's event was organized in collaboration with the Training and Educational Development Center (TEDC) of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. As the conference is listed as one of the accredited professional development opportunities by the TEDC, the Director, Ms. Eman Al Muhannadi, decided to sponsor 124 school teachers and supervisors to participate in the conference, so that they could enhance their teaching skills and improve the quality of their teaching practices.

The conference which was held on 4-5 November was inaugurated by the Foundation Program Associate Director, Dr. Hala Hadba followed by a welcome address by the Acting Head of the Foundation Program Department of English, Dr. Abir Ahmed, who underscored the pivotal role that the conference plays in “being a local, regional and international platform for English teachers and researchers to exchange best practices and share research findings”. She also pointed out that “participating in the QU International Conference on English Language Teaching is an opportunity for the participants to gain fresh perspectives and insights that they can implement in their classrooms”.

The two-day event hosted, among others, three plenary sessions delivered by prominent figures in ELT namely: Professor Liz Engand, Professor Deborah Healey and Dr. Justin Shewell, as well as other sessions by internationally recognized speakers in the field of English language teaching. Among the many high-

quality academic sessions were featured sessions by TESOL President, Prof. Shelley Taylor; TESOL Past President, Dr. Deborah Short; IATEFL President, Aleksandra Popovski; Dr. Chadia Mansour; Dr. Ahmet Serdar Acar; and Mr. Conan Kmiecik.



Professor Liz Engand presentation : A call for change more multimodal support for teachers: Photograph courtesy of External Relations

Career Development Day

Imad Al-Hawamdeh, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On November 12, the Foundation Program Students' Affairs Office and the Department of English organized the "Career Development Day" for the sixth time for ENGL 111 students under the excellence theme of Entrepreneurial Skills. This event was organized by Hayat Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs at the Foundation Program, Shamsa Alrushaidi, Lecturer of English, and Maria Kogos, Course Lead of ENGL 111. The event was organized in collaboration with Qatar University Career Development Center. The objective of the event was to educate students on their future career plans and familiarize them with the professionals' experiences of building a successful future career. In unit 6 of the ENGL 111 textbook, students learn about writing CVs and doing job interviews. Thus, the event was very relevant to students' needs and reinforced their learning outcomes.



Career Development Day Arabic announcement : Visual courtesy of External Relations

The event featured two professionals, Aisha Al-Mansoor and Reem Abloushi, from Teach for Qatar organization. The professionals met online with ENGL 111 students (2 male and 5 female sections) during class time and spoke for 20 minutes. Ratiba Issa and Charles Fullerton, lecturers of English at the Foundation Program, moderated the event sessions. During the event, each professional gave a PowerPoint presentation, which included an overview of the professional's career as well as the qualifications required for this specific career namely the university degree, experience, skills and training programs. Presenters also discussed areas of their strengths and areas they would like to work on to improve themselves in their field. The presentations were followed by a 20-minute Q&A session where students asked professionals different questions about their careers.

Presenter's insights were not only enlightening to students, but also highly inspiring. They were able to connect with the students and share real-world experiences that truly made a significant impact on society. One presenter shared her life story on how an accident derailed her university studies yet she persevered. She also spoke on how she took initiative and provided proposals that led her to get promoted and work with high-rank officials.

Students' satisfaction surveys reflected positive perceptions about the event. One student, Anas, said: "I would like to thank Dr. Reem for sharing her experience with us and giving us pieces of advice will help us to make our career path more clear and successful". He also commented, "I liked mostly her dedication and determination. She reached her goal despite passing by a difficult situation, but that did not prevent her from graduating and having a successful career".

Overall, the event was very beneficial for students and helped them prepare for their class presentations. It also inspired them to get ideas about how to apply for jobs and how to prepare for interviews.

Moments from Summer Photography Competition

Kenneth Downes, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program Students' Affairs Office held the "Moments from Summer" Photography competition during the summer of 2023 to offer students the opportunity to creatively showcase their photography talents. A competition poster invited students to submit a photograph of a "dynamic, lively authentic subject matter" related to their vacation and to write a brief descriptive paragraph of the moment captured before the 10th of September, 2023 closing date. The judges scored the photographs based on their originality, choice of subject matter and composition factors. The related written paragraphs were evaluated on content, relevance, clarity of message and language accuracy.

Gaining first place was Maha Albadr, whose submission described her experience at the United Nations 11th University Scholars Leadership Symposium in Bangkok, Thailand. On the third day of the symposium, she volunteered at a "Kindness Day", where she painted the walls of Muslim elementary school along with its pupils and really enjoyed herself. Maha conveyed her love of volunteer work and gratitude for the opportunity to attend the United Nations Symposium in Thailand. Maha's featured photo titled 'kindness day' shows children painting murals at the school.



Kindness day Elementary school children painting: Photograph courtesy of Maha Albadr

The runner-up was Basel Alkhameri who wrote about a sunset on the beach. He recounted how the magical beach sunset enchanted him. He felt deep calmness and tranquility and took a

moment to pause from life's distractions. In his words, "the scene was a reminder to myself to stay in the present and enjoy every moment of my life". His photo titled 'Sunset on the beach' was of a tangerine sun setting on the horizon of a choppy sea.



Sunset on the beach: Photograph courtesy of Basel Alkhameri

The third place winner, Meherunnesa Chowdhury shared her special moment at Patenga Naval Beach in Chittagong, Bangladesh. She described her speedboat trip, eating the local crab delicacy and drinking "fresh green coconut juice", which evoked the delights of summer at the beach. Her photo captures how she enjoyed her special summer moment of The Baizid Link Road to Patenga Sea Beach.



The Baizid Link Road to Patenga Beach, Bangladesh: Photograph courtesy of Meherunnesa Chowdhury

The 'Moments from Summer' competition attracted much interest from students, giving the judges a broad range of entries to enjoy and evaluate. It is hoped that future competitions will allow students to share more experiences and inspire others to volunteer abroad.

The Foundation Program Showcase Event Returns for Round Two

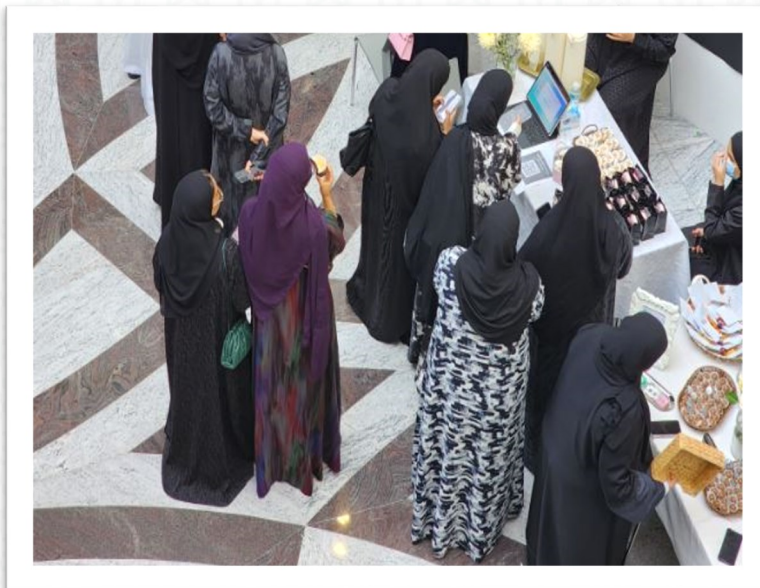
Conan Kmiecik, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On November 22nd, Qatar University's (QU) Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) business English course collaborated with QU's College of Business and Economics' (CBE) Center for Entrepreneurship & Organizational Excellence (CEOE), and Qatar Development Bank (QDB) to host the Foundation Program (FP) Showcase Event. This event brought together 55 teams of female students and 15 teams of male students from the Business English course, who presented their innovative business concepts through compelling displays and engaging pitches, connecting with a diverse audience including university members and business professionals.

Distinguished attendees at the showcase included Dr. Rana Sobh, the Dean of CBE; Dr. Saeed Albana, the Director for the CEOE; Dr. Hala Hadba, the FP Associate Director; Dr. Abir Ahmed, FPDE Head of Department; a representative from QDB; and a representative from Nama. Faculty members from both CBE and FPDE were also present, commending the students for their passion and self-assuredness demonstrated while presenting their business ideas. Throughout the event's three-hour duration, a panel of judges comprising faculty members from FPDE, the Center for Entrepreneurship, and QDB carefully evaluated all participating student teams.

The FP Showcase Event marks the culmination of the Business English Entrepreneurship Project, an assessment that challenges student teams to apply their business acumen and improve English communication skills while developing business ventures tailored for the Qatari market. The event resumed face to face during the Spring 2023 semester and was met with great enthusiasm as it offered students a valuable and high-quality learning opportunity once again. Prior to Spring 2023, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was held virtually.

The Showcase Event's success is attributed to the commitment of the course team, collaborative efforts with partners, and steadfast support from Foundation Program management. Looking forward, the Business English course team plans to elevate the caliber of student business ideas, helping them acquire essential QU graduate attributes (particularly fostering creativity and innovation), and to inspire graduating students to embark on their entrepreneurial endeavors.



Female students presenting their business concepts: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik.



Male students interacting with judges: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik.

Foundation Program Award Ceremony

Conan Kmiecik, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On November 27th, Qatar University's (QU) Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) business English course collaborated with QU's College of Business and Economics' (CBE) Center For Entrepreneurship and Organizational Excellence (CEOE), and a representative from Qatar Development Bank (QDB) to host the Foundation Program (FP) Award Ceremony. This event recognized teams of female students whose business ideas from the FP Showcase Event won first prize.

The Award Ceremony was a joint initiative with CBE, and representatives from all event stakeholders attended. The Award Ceremony specifically recognized the efforts of students, acknowledged event collaborators, and served as an additional incentive for students to pursue entrepreneurial paths. Notable attendees included Dr. Hezam Al- Awah, FP Program Director; Dr. Mohammed Elgammal, Section Head of Case Study and Community Engagement for CEOE; Dr. Hala Hadba, the FP Associate Director; Dr. Abir Ahmed, the Acting Head of FPDE; Ahmad Al-Saygh, a representative from QDB; Ms. Roula Raid, owner of Roula Art who generously offered gifts to the winning teams, and several local entrepreneurs.

hospitality and networking.

The following teams were the winners of their respective award categories.

- Most Innovative Product/Service Award - The Emotion Room
- Most Promising Startup Award - Vending-To-Go
- Entrepreneurial Spirit Award - MRDR Gym
- Social Impact Award - Natural for Eczema
- Creative Thinking Award - Budget Boutique
- Technology Impact Award - Be Active
- Community Engagement Award - Infinity Charge
- Growth Potential Award - AMNS Sweet Factory
- Great English Pitch Award - The Area Café
- Hospitality and Networking Award - Pet Care Audience Award - Glam Up



Foundation Program Showcase VIPs: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik.

During the FP Showcase Event, the Business English course team prioritized fostering interactive engagement among participating students throughout the three-hour event. To facilitate this, course instructors nominated students for award categories, each rigorously evaluated by two judges. These awards spanned diverse categories, acknowledging accomplishments in innovation, entrepreneurship, social impact, creative thinking, technology influence, community engagement, sustainability, growth potential, outstanding English pitch, and exceptional



Mr. Ahmed Sagyh giving students award certificates: Photograph courtesy of Conan Kmiecik.

Acknowledging student achievement after the FP Showcase Event is crucial, as it validates their hard work and dedication while serving as a motivational catalyst for a continued pursuit of excellence. This recognition, particularly during the FP Award Ceremony, cultivates a positive learning environment, encouraging students to actively engage in their QU coursework and persist in their entrepreneurial journey.

Ignite Your Entrepreneurial Future: Inaugural Competition

Conan Kmiecik, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On December 5th, Qatar University's (QU) College of Business and Economics' (CBE) Center For Entrepreneurship and Organizational Excellence (CEOE) collaborated with the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) business English course to host the Ignite Your Entrepreneurial Future Competition. This event brought together 8 teams of students from the Business English course, who presented their innovative business concepts created for the Qatari market. This competition was organized by Mohamoud Mohamed Ahmed, the Senior Learning and Development Specialist at CEOE, who designed it to imbue students with an entrepreneurial mindset, creativity, and business acumen; and empower them to thrive in the modern world.

The competition follows the Foundation Program Showcase Event and the FPDE Business English Entrepreneurship Project which is an assessment that challenges student teams to develop business ideas. 8 teams from the Business English course were short-listed from 70 female and male teams. To fuel the competitive spirit and recognize outstanding innovation, the event presented the following awards: first place 10,000 QAR; second place 6,000 QAR; and third place 4,000 QAR.

In this competition, participants pitched their ideas before a panel of judges featuring entrepreneurs, business professionals, and experienced faculty members in entrepreneurship and innovation. The competition provided students with an added platform to express their creativity, entrepreneurial aspirations, and communication skills. By participating in this journey, students gained valuable knowledge and skills to help them succeed in their future endeavors. Eventually, Giftminder (an app for reminding you about loved one's special days) won first place; Café Chic and Chill (a female only café for activities) won second place; and the Area Café (a deaf friendly café) won third place.

It is hoped that the business English course will add events like the Ignite Competition to build upon the course's Entrepreneurship Project. Such opportunities support students with their entrepreneurial development and incentivize business English faculty to explore further potential collaborative initiatives with entrepreneurship stakeholders, thereby creating multiple platforms for students to unleash their entrepreneurial potential.



First place team: Photograph courtesy of Ms. Faten Nabih Ramadan



Second place team: Photograph courtesy of Ms. Faten Nabih Ramadan



Third place team: Photograph courtesy of Ms. Faten Nabih Ramadan

Staff Focus: Interview with Dr. Robabeh Safari

Tiffany Dyson, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Interviewer: Hello, Dr. Safari. On behalf of FP Jareeda and the Foundation Program, thank you for allowing me to interview you about the recent completion of your doctoral thesis in religious philosophy.

Dr. Safari: Thank you as well. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your efforts in choosing my scientific success story as the subject of your interview.

Interviewer: Before we begin, can you tell me a bit about what led to your pursuit of a PhD in Religious Philosophy?

Dr. Safari: Well, I would like to begin by presenting my academic and professional journey. It started at Qatar University (QU) and has continued to the present day. Despite my administrative role as a student support specialist for 16 years, I have always been working on my academic and professional development.

I pursued a diploma in executive secretarial studies, and later, I felt a need to enhance my knowledge of religious studies. So, I enrolled at Al-Ansari Institute for Islamic Studies to obtain a diploma, which took me four years to complete. I graduated with distinction. Simultaneously, during the final year of my diploma and while I was working at QU, I enrolled in a master's program at Hamad Bin Khalifa University to study comparative religions.

I graduated with distinction in my master's program and my thesis entitled "Aspects of Jewish Secularism in the Thought of Jacob Milkin: An Analytical Study" was translated into both English and Arabic.

Subsequently, I pursued a Ph.D. in Religious Philosophy at the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM). My research focused on "The Role of Religious Discourse in Dialogue: A Case Study of Qatar." I received an excellence award and my dissertation was nominated for the best dissertation award at the College of Islamic Civilization.

Interviewer: Dr. Safari, it is clear that you have excelled in your studies. Could you explain your research in a way that someone who is not a philosopher can understand it?

Dr. Safari: Sure! My choice of this topic lies in the fact that religious discourse, as a means of dialogue and communication between Abrahamic religions, allows us to understand the foundations of our discourse to convince ourselves and others.



Dr. Robabeh Safari with Shahnaz Safari, Executive Assistant, Foundation Program: Photograph courtesy of Ms. Robabah Safari

I specifically chose Qatar as my focus because it stands out as an example of intellectual convergence, dialogue, peace, and cultural, social, and international security. Qatar has achieved the top position in this field in the Middle East and North Africa regions and ranks 27th in the Global Peace Index. It has always called for adopting a discourse that supports dialogue and communication between religions. This raised my interest in exploring the role of religious discourse in intercultural dialogue based on Qatar's experience.

Interviewer: Why is your research important in our world today?

Dr. Safari: The importance of this study lies in its contribution to proposing realistic solutions to various local and global issues related to instances of extremism. It also aims to promote a culture of dialogue, coexistence and acceptance of others.

Interviewer: How did your study shed light on these issues?

Dr. Safari: The novelty in this study is that it sheds light on the role of discourse in reducing hate speech to achieve social stability, and promote international peace and security. It emphasizes the importance of constructive dialogue, and the fact that religions do not promote confrontation but rather call for a peaceful co-existence.

Interviewer: How would you say your understanding of discourse and dialogue evolved during your research, and how does this relate to broader scientific developments?

Dr. Safari: Firstly, I deepened my understanding of discourse and its historical phases in Qatar, as well as the historical phases of dialogue. In regards to the second part of the question, I would say this allowed me to appreciate the role of discourse in intercultural dialogue and its contribution to communal and international security.

Interviewer: Finally, what role do you think discourse plays in shaping public policies and governance, and can you provide an example of this?

Dr. Safari: I see a significant role for discourse in shaping public policies, governance, security, peace, and coexistence. Discourse can provide the ethical foundations for dialogue, and solve social and political issues. I can provide an example from my doctoral thesis.

Religious discourse has had a clear impact on global events throughout history and in our contemporary world. Its positivity can be seen in some political speeches by decision-makers. For example, consider the discourse of his Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. His speeches are inclusive, free from discrimination, and are characterized by a humanistic language. In his Ramadan 2020 address, he opened with the words: "Dear citizens and all residents in the State of Qatar, I congratulate you on the arrival of the blessed month of Ramadan, hoping that it will be a month of blessings and mercy for our dear homeland and for the Arab, Islamic, and human nations as a whole." The positivity in this discourse lies in the fact that this religious occasion is addressed to all residents, regardless of their faith, ethnicity, or culture.

Interviewer: Thank you Dr. Safari for telling us a bit about your research and the process that led you to pursue your degree. As a closing question, what advice would you give to anyone thinking about pursuing a similar degree?

Dr. Safari: My advice is to maintain piety and faith in God, work diligently and honestly in your life. There may be difficulties and challenges, but if you place your trust in God and work sincerely, he will grant you success in unexpected places.

I can only express my gratitude to Allah for His blessings and guidance throughout my journey. I must also acknowledge the support and encouragement of those around me, especially my sister Shahinaz. She took on family responsibilities to allow me to focus on my success. Additionally, I am deeply thankful to my wonderful supervisor, the writer and novelist Hussein Ali Al-Qassim.



Dr. Robabah Safari with the thesis defense committee members at the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM): Photograph Courtesy of Dr. Robabah Safari

Interviewer: Dr. Safari, I think it is safe to say that everyone in the Foundation Program congratulates your achievements and the recent completion of your PhD in Religious Philosophy, and we wish you continued success.

New Faculty

Erika Van Winden

Hello everyone. My name is Erika Van Winden and I have been an English instructor for 13 years. I have taught courses in Foundation Programs, Rhetoric and Composition, and Research Writing; my TESOL career has allowed me to teach in Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Oman. In 2012, I was given a 2-year fellowship by the American University in Cairo to complete my Master's degree. Inside the classroom, I believe it is important to develop a good relationship with my students, promote a positive atmosphere, and establish a strong work ethic. I also try to help students embrace technology to prepare them for 21st century expectations and challenges. I hope by the end of each course, students have become individuals who understand the importance of setting goals, thinking critically, enhancing their knowledge, and having confidence in themselves. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy listening to podcasts and riding horses. I also compete in the Qatar Equestrian Hathab Logines Tour in dressage and showjumping with my horse.



Erika Van Winden: Photograph courtesy of Ahmed Hazratzad

Tihomir Davchev



Tihomir Davchev: Photograph courtesy of Ahmed Hazratzad

My name is Tihomir Davchev and I am a new faculty member at Foundation Program Department of English at Qatar University. I am currently teaching ENGL111 and I am a member of the e-learning committee. When it comes to teaching, I believe that teachers should be lighthouses for their students. The light and energy emanating from the teacher motivates and encourages students to do their best in class. A good teacher is armed with patience, clear explanations and excellent classroom management. I come from a family of teachers, which is partly why I chose to complete a B.A. in English Language and Literature (teaching stream) at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia. After that, my education continued at the University of Leeds, where I completed my M.A. in TESOL. Since then, I have taught in Macedonia, the UAE, Oman and now Qatar. I love interacting with my students and helping them out, especially with their productive skills. My interests are learning and teaching vocabulary and teacher motivation. In my free time, I love playing tennis and table tennis. My hobbies are hiking and traveling and I love meeting new people. Please get in touch if you share any of my hobbies.

Zarina Yusaf

I was born in the UK, but moved to Christchurch, New Zealand with my Kiwi mother, Pakistani father and two brothers at a young age. I spent a very happy childhood there, before venturing out into the world once again- starting with the USA, the UK and Europe before eventually settling in Sydney, Australia. This is where I got a lot of things done - I had 4 children, studied a B.A in Political Science and a Masters in TESOL, and worked in vocational education, mainly in the area of refugee and migrant settlement. Eventually, the travel bug hit again and I took up the opportunity to work in Abu Dhabi. Despite an initial 1-year plan, our family loved life there and we stayed for just over ten years, finally leaving in 2018 for a stint in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Having recently moved back to the Middle East, I am very happy to be starting my journey at Qatar University and am looking forward to a new and challenging chapter here in Doha. I like to walk and be near the sea. I love art and have a particular interest in Islamic design, as well as in history, culture, film and performance.



Zarina Yusaf: Photograph courtesy of Zarina Yusaf

Muhd Khudri



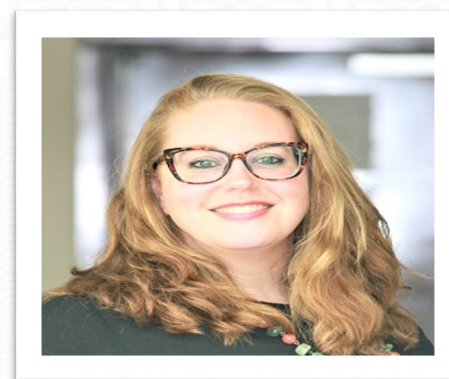
Muhd Khudri: Photograph courtesy of Ahmed Hazratzad

I am Muhd Khudri from Malaysia; and “*Muhd*” in my name is pronounced “Muhammad”. Apparently, this is how it was commonly spelled in Malaysia many years ago. I have been blessed with the opportunity of not only delivering English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses at multiple universities in Malaysia, but also Aviation English – a specific branch under the domain of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Now, I am teaching EAP courses and pursuing my future research endeavors. As a fellow non-native speaker of English, my absolute joy is when my ESL students actually grasp the lessons discussed, vocalize the pronunciations taught, and compose their ideas with confidence. Outside my professional lecturing schedule, you will most likely find me either trying out various eateries in shopping malls, or playing volleyball at the Qatar Volleyball Association in either New Salata or Awsaj Recreation Centers in the Education City.

Rachel Anna Ramey

Hello, all! I am Rachel and I am thrilled to join the Foundation team here at QU. I received my M.A. in TEFL from the American University in Cairo in 2011, and since then have taught in the US and more recently in Iraq. I greatly enjoyed my time at the American University of Iraq Sulaimani and was fortunate enough to act in different capacities in their Academic Preparatory Program.

These included time as a lecturer, student affairs liaison, and as deputy director. However, my heart will always be in the classroom, where I enjoy connecting with my students and helping them build their confidence in their English skills. In my free time, I enjoy reading, exploring new places, and spending time with my husband and two children.



Rachel Anna Ramey: Photograph courtesy of Ahmed Hazratzad

Elicitation: Is it worth it?

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English & Co-chair of Newsletter Committee, Foundation Program

From the first day of our teaching journey, one of the cardinal rules of our EFL/ESL training is “Don’t forget to elicit!” Many trainee teachers have undoubtedly read “Where was the elicitation in your lesson?” in their post-observation feedback. “I must elicit!” becomes the rookie teacher’s latest post-it note to stick on the fridge door, along with “Reduce my TTT!”, “Monitor more!” and “Stop echoing!”

Elicitation itself is not a difficult concept to grasp. According to Scrivener (2012), elicitation is simply a strategy for asking students questions to ascertain what they know. A wealth of information exists in the education field that highlights the benefits of elicitation. The British Council Teaching English website contains a

very useful summary of why we should elicit, including, but not limited to: activating student knowledge, self-discovery, making learned information more memorable, diagnosing weaknesses, fostering a student-centered classroom and a more dynamic learning environment. However, elicitation has its pitfalls – Halim and Halim (2019) caution about its potentially time-consuming nature and the risk that a single student may dominate the proceedings. Case (2009) suggests it can result in silence if students lack ideas on what is being elicited, which unwittingly may lead to more teacher talk time. Student fear of teacher or peer criticism, general shyness or not wanting to show off, can also hinder elicitation efforts (Ur, 2012).

Thornbury (2012) writes a delightful and witty passage (2012) on how not to use elicitation. He states that typical eliciting-type questions often involve learners not displaying what they know, but guessing what they do not know, as they attempt to guess answers that only the teacher knows. Thornbury suggests it may be more constructive to ask real questions in order to get real answers.

As with all cases, perhaps the best practice is to simply gauge what kind of students you have in front of you and take things from there when deciding if elicitation, and what form it should take, is going to achieve your teaching goals.

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Math and English Skills for a Successful Engineer Workshop Series

Susan Saafan, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program


Under the aegis of Hayat El Samad, Assistant Director for Student Affairs, the English and Math Success Zone teams spotted an opportunity to support aspiring engineering students by addressing some common cross-curricular challenges. As a result, the team came up with the following four online workshops entitled: 'Cost Analysis of Solar Farms' and 'Building Bridges' focusing on math skills, '3-D Security' and 'Describing Houses' focusing on English skills. Supporting the presenters, the Student Affairs administration team designed eye-catching posters and liaised with other faculties to promote the events as widely as possible.

Raed Marabeh, a teaching assistant at the Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM), organized and delivered the 'Cost Analysis of Solar Farms' workshop to emphasize the crucial role that math skills play in engineering. The aim was to have students analyze cost and benefits by solving optimization problems that can crop up when designing efficient solar energy farms. Meanwhile, Ahmed Abdelaziz, a teaching assistant at FPDM, was responsible for designing and delivering the 'Building Bridges' workshop where participants were introduced to the specifications and process of designing a bridge, and the calculations involved.

Engineering Analysis exercise


Your engineering task: To design your own solar panel farm that meets the following constraints:

- You have at most 100 available plots to fill with solar panels (see grid below).
- Currently each slot is home to a family of sheep that supplies the local wool industry, which requires a \$200 compensation to the farmer for each slot removed from raising sheep.
- You have at most \$15,000 to spend.
- You must generate at least 400 watts of energy per day using any mix of two types of solar panels:
 - The *basic model* costs \$100 per panel and generates 7 watts of energy per day while occupying one slot, but it eliminates all plant growth due to the shade it creates, which displaces the sheep.
 - The *deluxe model* costs \$450 per panel and generates 13 watts of energy per day while occupying two slots, but it is elevated so that plants can survive under it, which means the sheep can remain.



• **Optimization**

The action of making the best or most effective use of a situation or resource.



Solar Farms Workshop Task for Engineering Students. Visual courtesy of Raed Marabeh

Screenshot of 'Solar Farm' online workshop: Visual courtesy of Raed Marabeh

English team members Yaser Al-Shatnawi and Maimuna Aghliw organized material to deliver the 'Describing Houses' English workshop that helped participants learn useful vocabulary to describe and discuss housing through reading and speaking tasks. Ryan Brendzy was responsible for preparing and delivering the '3D Security' workshop to train participants to identify and understand the main ideas within engineering texts as well as learn specific mechanical engineering vocabulary.

The entire team planned the workshops to be as student-centered as possible. Raed Marabeh stated that this made students more engaged and enthusiastic. Ryan Brendzy, a lecturer in the Foundation Program Department of English, described his participants as very responsive to his questions and relaxed presentation style. All presenters felt that attendees were appreciative as they requested future similar workshops in their feedback. One participant, Mezna Al Shamari, commented, "The workshop was very beneficial. I learned a new skill, which is creative thinking, through the activities and questions posed during the workshop. The ideas presented were relevant and comprehensive, and the presenter's performance was good."

Effects of English 1 Weekly Writings on Midterm Writing Test Scores

Charles Fullerton, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Background

Teachers and students often take for granted that focused practice in a given subject area will lead to learning. This is the main guiding principle behind all teaching. One of the main objectives of the embedded course English 1 at Qatar University is “to improve writing skills through a process of drafting, reviewing, reflecting and producing elementary texts.” With this in mind, students are given a weekly writing (WW) task, which they are expected to finish in class each week. Teachers are instructed to give whole-class feedback the following week on areas in which most students could make improvements (generally punctuation, capitalization and grammar). These WW tasks are designed to prepare students for the writing tasks they will do in their midterm and final exams. They provide clear and focused weekly practice that aims at improving writing performance.

The current study

In this short paper, five English 1 classes were analyzed for the effectiveness of their WW. The main research question is ‘Do students who do their WW fare better on the writing portion of their midterm exam than those who do not?’ For the purposes of this study, students were arbitrarily considered to have “done” their WW if they had completed 80% or more of their WW assignments whatever their grade. There are five WWs done in class before the midterm and they are worth a total of 5 marks, so any student who completed four or more was deemed to have done their work. The subjects for the study are two female English 1 classes from Fall 2022 and three male classes from Spring 2023.

Results

	All classes	Average Writing Grade on Midterm	Women	Average Writing Grade on Midterm	Men	Average Writing Grade on Midterm
Total	103	8.05	47	8.22	56	7.88
Students who did WW	78	8.43	40	8.49	38	8.36
Students who did not do WW	25	6.89	7	6.68	18	7.1

Before doing any statistical analysis, a couple of observations can be reached from the data in the chart above. Firstly, the female students did more WWs than their male counterparts, with 85% and 68% completion rates respectively. Across all groups, those who did the WW tasks achieved higher midterm writing grades higher than those who did not. As expected, and after consulting the Statistics Consulting Unit (SCU) at Qatar University for help with the Mann Whitney non-parametric statistical data analysis, a statistically significant effect of completing WW assignments was observed. Thus, the answer to the research question is as follows: students who did their WW performed better on the writing task of their midterm exam than those who did not.

Gender	Alpha (p-value)
Men	0.007
Women	0.008

Potential problems

This research was very limited in scope. Only 103 students participated in the study. Although the results are statistically significant, a larger study with more classes and students might provide more reliable results. There is also the problem of causation. Although it cannot be clearly inferred that students doing the WWs 'caused' improved midterm writing scores, it may be the case that the stronger students were more likely to do their assignments. However, the correlation was clear. In fact, the two variables are closely linked as they reflect that learning occurs through doing course work and this logically leads to improved results.

Follow-up

It would be interesting to see if the classes replicate different classes, teachers and years. Larger sample sizes involving more students and using both the midterm and final exam would provide more robust results. However, it is suspected that a similar result would be obtained.

Conclusions

The takeaway message for teachers and students is clear: make sure classwork is completed. Time on task gets results. Specifically, in English 1, doing the WW task every week apparently leads to better midterm exam writing grades. To sum up, the WW task is an effective teaching tool and students should be encouraged to complete it.

Note: The article is still awaiting Qatar University's IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval.



Female Foundation Building: Photograph courtesy of James Scotland

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