

# FP Jareeda

## Welcome to FP Jareeda

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

I would like to welcome you to the latest action-packed edition of the Foundation Program's quarterly newsletter, FP Jareeda.

In this issue, you will find articles on the 4th Qatar University Foundation Program Interna-

tional Conference and the history of the Foundation Program Department of English. In addition, student work from the Foundation Program's Writing Workshop Intermediate (W002) course is showcased.



James Scotland: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad

## The TED Talks Workshops

David Pearson, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Everyone has a story to tell. That was the central message of the Foundation Program Department of English TED Talks workshops which were held on October 21st and 23rd 2019, for female and male students.

The workshops introduced students to the concept of a TED Talk. Students first watched an example TED Talk presented by a faculty member and were then guided through a series of exercises to create their own TED Talk.

The TED Talks workshops were followed by a competition, entitled "Aspiring to Excellence," whose purpose was to enhance students' awareness of

the English language in an enjoyable and interesting forum as well as to increase their confidence in public speaking.

Students were taught that people have always told stories. Before humans invented writing, stories were how they passed down important information to their children. The number one task of a TED Talk is to take an idea that is in one's mind and pass it on to the minds of the audience. To do that, speakers need to create a compelling story.

Using examples from both Aristotle and Pixar, students were shown that a story is not simply an incident. A story has a beginning, middle, and end. It

must also have a character who changes in some way.

Students were encouraged to make their listeners care by recounting something funny, personal, or hard to believe but true. Students were also taught how important metaphorical language is for understanding. For example, a technology like CRISPR, which can remove or add genetic information, could be likened to a word processor that cuts and pastes DNA.

Finally, students were encouraged to ask: 'Who does this story benefit?' and 'Why would people care about what I am saying?' Hopefully, the TED Talk workshops have inspired the students to tell their stories.

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Qatar University Foundation Program International Conference

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The 4th Qatar University Foundation Program International Conference, *Critical Thinking in Language Curriculum for the 21st Century*, was held on 14-15th December, 2019. The 2019 conference was hosted by the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) in order to impart professional development opportunities for their colleagues and peers from around the globe. The conference enabled participants and attendees to avail themselves of workshops and presentations to hone their skills and knowledge in fostering critical thinking skills which will help students to become better independent learners and critical thinkers.

The conference began on Saturday at the Ibn Khaldoun Hall with a welcome address by Dr. Omar Al-Ansari, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Qatar University. This was followed by the keynote address delivered by Dr. Ibrahim Al-Kabbi, Dean of General



Prof. Rana Sobh, Acting Director of Core Curriculum Program, Prof. Ibrahim Al-Kaabi, Dean of General Studies, and Acting Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Omar Al-Ansari, Qatar University Vice President for Academic Affairs, Mrs. Fawzia Al-Khater, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoE), Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, Foundation Program Director, Mrs. Sheikha al-Rumaihi, Head of the English Language Curriculum at the MoE: Photograph courtesy of Ali Mohamed Emad el Hussein

Studies at QU. The plenary was presented by Dr. Awad Ibrahim from the University of Ottawa in Canada. His animated and amusing talk, *Critical Thinking, Curriculum Studies and Generation Z in Language*

*Classrooms*, was very relevant and topical. According to Dr. Ibrahim (Ibrahim, 2019, December), "In order to understand and deploy critical thinking ... in our language classrooms, I will argue we need to understand three very important layers and categories, curriculum studies, Generation Z and liquid modernity."

Presenters and workshop facilitators came from many different countries including Kuwait, Oman, Algeria, Turkey, Australia, Pakistan, Canada, the USA, and the UK. Presenters from Qatar-based institu-

tions included the Ministry of Education, College of the North Atlantic-Qatar, Weill-Cornell, Texas A&M, Community College of Qatar, Qatar Foundation Schools, English Modern Schools-Qatar, Indian School of Qatar, and Qatar University. In addition to the plenary speaker, the conference hosted sixty-five workshops or presentations. The FPDE was very well-represented as conference contributors. Over thirty faculty members gave workshops, presentations, or participated in panel discussions.



The Dean, Dr. Al Kabbi, Addressing Audience: Photograph courtesy of Ali Mohamed Emad el Hussein

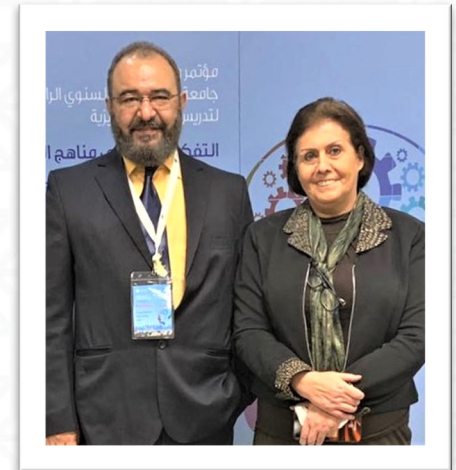


According to registration records, there were 346 participants; this included presenters, attendees, volunteers, and exhibitors. Conference partners, the US Embassy and the Teaching and Educational Redevelopment Centre (TEDC), which sponsored approximately 150 attendees. A significant number of attendees, 137, were teachers from government schools in addition to 119 faculty from the FPDE. There were also 12 student volunteers and 2 outside volunteers. Additionally, a number of organizations and institutions participated as conference exhibitors: Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Garnet Publishing, National Geographic Learning, Pearson Publishing, Student Learning Support Center, FPDE Success Zone, and QU-Community Service and Continuing Education Centre.

One of the highlights of the conference was the introduction of featured panels; one well-attended session was a panel on critical thinking and language curriculum moderated by Aymen Al Sheikh, former FPDE instructor now at Texas A&M. The distinguished panel included Shaikha Al Remaihi, Ministry of Education & Higher Education, Mohammed Manasreh, FPDE

HoD, Zohreh Eslami, Texas A&M University, Qatar, Mick King, Community College of Qatar, and Rachid Bendriss, Weill Cornell Medical College, Qatar. Another popular panel in which Fatma Abu Jalalah, Sarah Campion, Orkun Canby and Jessica Westbrook participated, was moderated by Enita Barrett, Foundation Program Special Needs Co-ordinator. The title was *Disabilities and Special Needs in the Foundation Program*. Still another interesting panel discussion was entitled *How to Improve Process-based Writing in L2 Classes*. The panel discussed the strengths and drawbacks of this type of writing. Moderated by Orkun Canby, panelists included Aaron Monroe, Abir Ahmed, Easton Phidd, Muhammed Syed, Randy Briones, and Naima Sarfraz.

Many thanks are owed to Dr. Okon Effiong, the chair of the FPDE Conference Committee, and his team of hardworking and dedicated conference organizers in addition to student and outside volunteers. The FPDE is also indebted to its conference partners: the Qatar Ministry of Education and Higher Education, The United States Embassy of Qatar, Texas A&M University – Qatar and TEDC for their



Ahmad Hazratzad and Dr. Zohra Eslami:  
Photograph courtesy of Ali Mohamed Emad el Hussein

support.

## References

Ibrahim, A. (2019, December). *Critical thinking, curriculum studies and generation Z in language classrooms*. Plenary conducted at the 4th Qatar University Foundation Program International Conference, Critical Thinking in Language Curriculum for the 21st Century, Qatar, Doha.



Conference Visitors in Registration Hall: Photograph courtesy of Ali Mohamed Emad el Hussein



## QU Students Showcase 200 Business Project Ideas at the 6th Exhibition of the Foundation Program's ENGL 252 Entrepreneurial Showcase Event

Sara Ahmad Salmeh, Engagement and Communications Specialist, Foundation Program

On Wednesday, November 6th, 2019, the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), in conjunction with the Center for Entrepreneurship (CFE) in the College of Business and Economics (CBE), held the 6th Exhibition of the ENGL 252 Entrepreneurial Showcase. For this event, students created posters to display their English for Business Communication course projects, which consisted of ideas for new businesses in Qatar. Students explained their concepts for their new businesses to the public and to a panel of judges, demonstrating the English language skills they learned throughout the

course. This event aims to promote students' entrepreneurial potential and to enhance their communication skills in English.

The showcase event ran from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and more than 200 students participated. Sixty-four female teams and twenty-four male teams displayed posters that visualized their new business ideas and initiatives. The Foundation Program English for Business Communication faculty evaluated the posters and selected the three best ideas of both male and female teams.

The three best ideas from male student teams were awarded trophies and prizes at the end of the event while the three best ideas from female teams were selected to compete in the FP ENGL 252 Entrepreneurial Presentation Event. The competition for first, second and third place was judged by an expert panel of three judges, Juha Peralampi from CBE at QU, Ruqaya Al Sada from the Bedaya Center for Entrepreneurship, and Conan Kmiecik from FPDE at QU. Judges evaluated the three teams at the event by listening to formal pitch presentations from the female students.



Maroon and Ahmad Bakery Business Poster Projects: Photograph courtesy of Mohamed Salim



The presentation teams were comprised of three students and each team member presented specific sections of their business idea. In addition to the competition awards, students received a course grade for their presentations from their course instructor based on four categories: English Grammar and Vocabulary, Content, Organization, and Presentation Skills (i.e., eye contact, gestures, voice, visual aids, etc.). Each student presented for approximately three minutes. Presentations included additional information that they developed in the English for Business Communication course, including marketing, surveys and mission statements.

First place among the females was won by a group which marketed Maroons, high quality pajamas for women with a personalized design. Group members were Abrar Radi, Munira Al-Sahli and Hissa Al-Muhannadi. Second place went to Ahmed's Bakery which specialized in high quality products, especially gluten free. Group

members included Mashaeel Al-Kuwari, Sharoq Al-Marri and Reem Abdullatif. The 3<sup>rd</sup> winner was the Dafe'at Albun project. It was a coffee plantation producing coffee made in Qatar and the idea was devel-

oped by May Al-Samikh, Najlaa Al-Hajri and Reem Al-Dosari. Awards were presented by Dr. Hezam Al-Awah, Director of the Foundation Program, Dr. Nadeem Hashem, Assistant Director for Academic Affairs in the FP and Dr. Muhammad Al-Manasrah, Head of the FPDE.

Students, judges, and audiences were astounded by the performance of the students and the quality of the projects. Ruqaya Alsada, Entrepreneurship Advisor at Bedaya Center, said "I'm really impressed by the fact that students are learning more about entrepreneurship and how they can pitch their ideas and actually start implementing them as we saw in the Final Presentation Event. It is very important for students nowadays to have more hands-on experiences rather than only sticking to classroom work!" Dr. Juha-Petteri Peralampi, the Manager of Business Incubation at QU CFE said, "This event is a wonderful platform for fostering the capacity building of wannabe entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs within Qatar University."



Students during the panel discussion: Photograph courtesy of Mohamed Salim



Dr. Nadeem Hashim and Dr. Mohamed Manasreh: Photograph courtesy of Mohamed Salim

# An Overview of the Math FP Success Zone

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

Offering services on both male and female campuses, the FP Math Success Zone (MSZ) plays a vital role in improving the math skills of foundation students. The MSZ team does not replace the lecturers; instead, the team offers tutoring sessions intended to help students improve their math skills.

The MSZ offers walk-in tutoring sessions. Students can come for one-to-one tutoring without a prior appointment. Each tutor is ready to explain and work through concepts and/or problems with a student to develop their understanding.

The MSZ provides weekly intensive revision sessions. Students are encouraged to attend these sessions during which they are given the opportunity

A Math Tutorial Session: Photograph courtesy of Muneer Al Wadi



to review math problems or concepts covered in class for that week.

Prior to the midterm and final ex-

ams, the MSZ offers intensive revision sessions. During these exam preparatory sessions, various exam-type questions are discussed and solved. Students are provided with authentic sample exams. Additionally, students are informed about exam regulations.

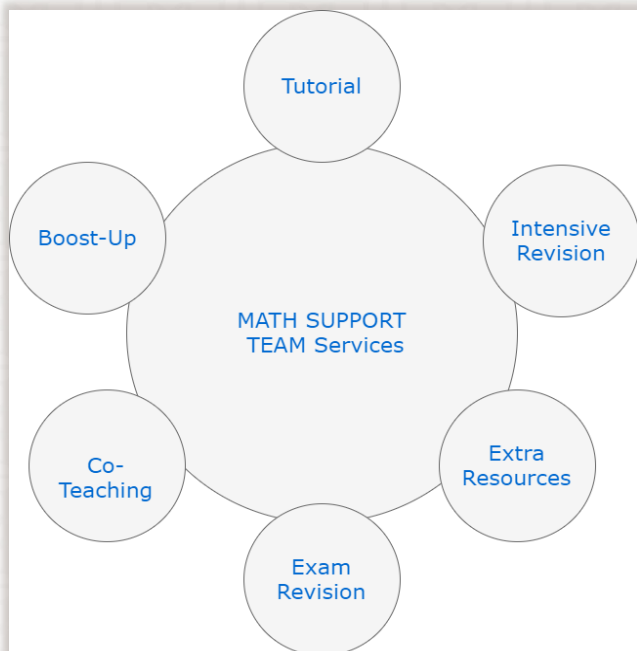
The MSZ also runs 'boost-up' assessment sessions. This service involves three optional math quizzes administered throughout the term to provide students with an opportunity to 'boost' their grades. Students who require extra points are encouraged to complete these quizzes.

The MSZ also prepares supplementary review resources and materials for the Pre-Calculus and Elementary Algebra courses. Students can complete these resources and discuss

their work with an MSZ tutor.

The MSZ tutors co-teach during both Pre-Calculus and Elementary Algebra lab hours. This involves a one-hour weekly math lab session which is designed to improve students' math-solving skills.

Overall, the Foundation Program Department of Math and the MSZ are committed to developing students' math skills to a level that enables them to meet the Foundation Program's math requirements. The MSZ tutoring sessions are becoming very popular. For instance, more than 1300 visits were recorded during Spring 2019. Statistics show that the more frequently students visit the tutorial room, the better they perform in exams.



Visual courtesy of Raed Marabeh



# How to Study Elementary Algebra

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

Algebra is a main math branch which is frequently used in business, accounting, science, engineering and various scientific fields. In the Foundation Program Department of Math, Elementary Algebra is offered to prepare students for the calculus series of courses. Many students fear algebra, but it is actually not that difficult. Basic algebra can be learned and understood relatively easily.

Acquiring good math skills is a cumulative experience. Students should review basic arithmetic (i.e., addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) and basic math skills (i.e., negative and positive numbers, basic geometry, and algebraic expressions) that they have learned in high school. Revising these will help them to handle higher-level algebra problems more easily.

$$X = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

Visual courtesy of Raed Marabeh

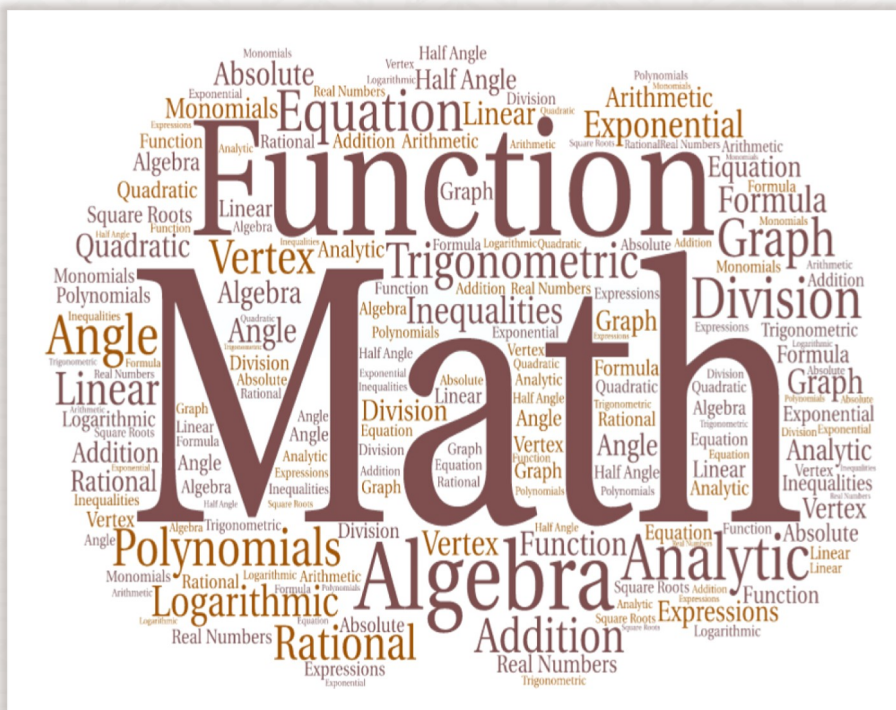
Students need to deal with letters and symbols as well as numbers. A letter in math simply represents a number(s); this is called the value(s) of the variable. The variable can be arbitrary (i.e., not fully speci-

fied) or unknown. A solid understanding of this concept will make learning algebra easier.

Students need to learn how to solve algebraic problems themselves. This involves consistent and constant practice. Regular practice helps students to learn how to identify their mistakes, find correct solutions, and ultimately improve their performance.

Students should seek help and support. Every question in math is important, even if it seems easy or minor. Students should not hesitate to ask for assistance during their instructor's office hours, tutorial sessions, and/or to visit the Math FP Success Zone (MSZ).

If students have a consistent and well-organized study plan, seek advice, and make a good use of the services and support that are provided by the Foundation Program Department of Math, then their algebraic skills should improve.



Visual courtesy of the Math FP Success Zone



## Foundation Program Alumnus: Ahmad Salehi

Elisabeth Szweczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

**Interviewer:** Thank you for coming. Can you tell me something about yourself?

**Ahmad:** I am Iranian, but I grew up in Qatar. I studied at the Iranian School of Qatar.

**Interviewer:** So, how many languages do you speak?

**Ahmad:** I speak Persian (Farsi), English, some Arabic, and some Urdu.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your schooling. Did you study English at school?

**Ahmad:** I went to the Iranian School in Qatar. All my courses were taught in Persian. I also studied English there for seven years, but I didn't learn much. When I joined the Foundation Program in Spring 2018, I realized that my English language skills were very weak. My twin brother Mohammad was with me at Qatar University (QU) and had the same problems. Because our reading skills were not very good, we both had to do Reading Workshop (R001). My brother is now a nursing student at University of Calgary in Qatar while I chose to stay at QU.

**Interviewer:** Well done! What were your main difficulties?

**Ahmad:** Mainly reading and writing. Mr. Jabouri, my reading teacher, taught me good techniques like scanning and sum-

marizing. The M-Reader books were very useful; some of the books were interesting and helped improve my vocabulary. My biggest problem was writing; although I was placed into Writing Workshop 2 (R002), I had no idea how to write an essay. It was not easy at first; however, my teacher, Mr. Glenn Stevens was very helpful and patient. He advised me to go to the Success Zone for extra support. Mr. Ryan Brendzy was my tutor; he was incredible. He really helped me learn how to develop my writing skills and write a good essay.

**Interviewer:** Which class did you enjoy the most?

**Ahmad:** My Integrated Core class was a lot of fun and we learned so many new things. My teacher, Mrs. Elisabeth, showed us videos and made us think critically about each unit theme. We even had a shoe fashion show. It was so fun. The students in my class were very nice and I am still friends with some of them. I really enjoyed doing the project and I learned so much. My topic was the 2022 World Cup; writing the questionnaire and analyzing the data were very interesting tasks. I worked really hard on this project, so I wrote an excellent report and gave a great presentation.



Ahmad Salehi with Mr. Ryan Brendzy: Photograph courtesy of Maimuna Aghliw

**Interviewer:** When you left the Foundation Program, did you feel you were ready to start your major?

**Ahmad:** Of course! My Foundation Program courses and the Success Zone really prepared me for Post Foundation and for my major, Civil Engineering. My Integrated Core teacher taught us the importance of meeting deadlines, so I learned time-management; all my teachers

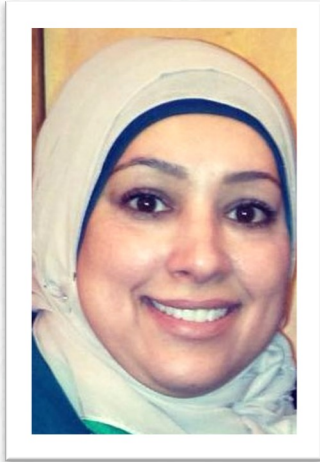
helped me learn good study skills. I am a much better student because of the Foundation Program. I really appreciate everything the teachers did for me.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much Ahmed. Best of luck with your studies.



## Responding to the Fire Alarm

Wedad Maatouk, Health & Safety Committee Chair, Foundation Program



Wedad Maatouk: Photograph courtesy of Wedad Maatouk

When you hear the fire alarm, it is important to know what to do. Stay calm and quiet so you can hear any important instructions. You must treat every fire alarm seriously, even if it is a practice drill. You need to stop

whatever you are doing and react immediately. You should look for the nearest exit and leave the building. Remember not to use the elevator or run when leaving the building. Always close the door behind you if you are the last person in the room. This will limit the fire and block the smoke and heat from entering other rooms. It is essential to keep the lights on so that firefighters can see well. However, if you get trapped inside during a fire, try to get to a room with a window in order to use it as a possible fire exit. If your clothes catch fire, remember to stop, drop, and roll.

When you are outside the building, move to a safe distance and leave the sidewalks clear so that firefighters can

get through. Before you reenter the building, make sure that the fire alarm has stopped and that all is clear.



Visual courtesy of Pixabay

## A Foundation Student's Sample Cause and/or Effect Essay

Roy Briones, Writing Workshop Course Co-Lead, Foundation Program

Writing Workshop 2 (W002) is an intermediate-level writing workshop in the Foundation Program Department of English. W002 students complete three writing portfolios over the course of a semester. In each portfolio, students proceed through a writing process that

allows them to identify topics relevant to a genre, write multiple drafts, undergo peer revision, and evaluate output through an error log activity and self-reflection. Ultimately, students produce a well-written final draft that by itself is a credible reflection of stu-

dent-learning. The final draft below is a Cause and/or Effect essay, which was written by Sarah Ahmed. Sara has written about the negative and positive effects of social media on young people.



Roy Briones: Photograph courtesy of Ahmad Hazratzad



# The Effects of Social Media on Young People

Sarah Ahmed, Student, Foundation Program

How do you think social media affect young people? Nowadays people all over the world are using social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, among others. Young people are using social media a lot because they do not care about the money and time they waste. When they spend a lot of time scrolling pictures and videos or even chatting, it is probably because of boredom, feelings of loss and emptiness, and the lack of awareness about what exactly they should do. Perhaps, maybe their parents are not good guides for their children. Having said this, there are negative effects of social media on young people and these are depression and addiction, but social media also have a positive effect, which is self-expression.

The first negative effect of social media on young people is depression. Depression from social media is a result of young people comparing their lives with images of other young people on social media. For example, the first question that comes into young people's minds when they spend too much time on social media is, "Why is my life not exciting like this?" Moreover, when they try to have the same "Exciting life" that they see on social media; they will eventually figure out that it is hard to live a life that does not really belong to them and get the attention and excitement they need. Social media also results in bullying. Young people easily fall into cyberbullying, which can destroy their self-confidence. Consequently, if they are victims of cyberbullying, they will be shy about asking for help, and they will never tell their parents.

The second negative effect of social media on young people is addiction. It is common knowledge that many young people spend the whole day scrolling through videos and pictures on social media like Instagram, Facebook, or even chatting on WhatsApp non-stop until they reach addiction-levels. This will keep them away from their responsibilities, commitments, and even the real world itself. The thing is, it does not matter how famous they are in social media because it is nothing compared to the real-life skills that they lose gradually. Because of their addiction to social media, they might stop attending events or family meetings that usually help people to improve their communication skills. Social media addicts only want to stay at home. Consequently, this will affect their family relationships that will become weak and awkward over time.

However, a positive effect of social media on young people is it helps them to express themselves. Social media do not affect young people in a negative way all the time. Young people like social media because it gives them the chance to express themselves and talk about whatever they want. For that reason, young people can use social media like Youtube to show their talents, opinions and hobbies, as they like. They also can live and see different experiences, learn diverse cultures and improve themselves through social media. They can also use social media to build friendships from different countries around the world.

In conclusion, social media affect young people in negative and positive ways like loneliness and intemperance, but social media also give the young people the ability to express themselves. To summarize, young people can easily fall into cyberbullying. In addition, they can also lose their life skills. However, young people can build relationships from different countries and culture around the world through social media. My opinion then is social media have different sides, so people will not get the positive side unless they used it in the right way and with self-control. Parents should also be helpful guides for their young children and should exercise the authority to stop them from using social media whenever the negative effects start to show up.



## Staff Focus: Mr. Mohamed Afinas, Computer Lab Specialist

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

**Interviewer:** Please tell me about yourself.

**Mohamed:** I come from Calicut, Kerala in south India. I studied Computer Science at the University of Bangalore.

**Interviewer:** Let's talk about your career background.

**Mohamed:** I started working as an IT specialist in India. Then I got a job in Bahrain where I worked as an IT Specialist for the Bahrain Defence Hospital.

**Interviewer:** When did you start working at Qatar University?

**Mohamed:** I've been here for twelve years. I joined QU in 2007 as a Language Lab Specialist for the Foundation Program Department of English.

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your work here.

**Mohamed:** I do a variety of different things. First of all, I am in charge of four language lab facilities on two campuses: two labs on the Men's

Campus, Computer labs and Foundation (A06) and College of Medicine building (H12), and two on the women's, Al-Bida building (D01), and Women's Foundation Building (D05). I work with both faculty and students. On a daily basis, I provide IT support for faculty and students in Blackboard, e-Learning platforms, email, laptop problems, application installation, Wi-Fi issues, lab bookings, and so on. I am also an IT specialist for the Website & E-Learning Committee as well as a member of the Scheduling Committee.

**Interviewer:** What is the most common problem teachers ask you to solve?

**Mohamed:** Most problems are with classroom technology such as projector issues, Blackboard, MyELT and Grade Center issues.

**Interviewer:** What do you do for the scheduling committee?

**Mohamed:** I work with

the committee members on organizing faculty schedules for the three terms of the academic year. I mainly enter information on the Web Data Collector (WDC). It is a very time consuming job as there are lots of schedules to organize and preferences to consider. In fact, there are over 400 sections, which need to be inputted within a very short time frame. WDC entry is quite sensitive, so I need to be extremely careful.

**Interviewer:** I know you are also busy with the English entry test AC-CUPLACER.

**Mohamed:** Yes. I administer the ACCUPLACER exam for Qatar University Testing Centre (QUTC) on both campuses. These are held at the beginning and end of each semester. In the fall semester, it is particularly busy with the new intake students.

**Interviewer:** What do you find most challenging about your job?



Mohamed Afinas

**Mohamed:** Probably having to go back and forth between the two campuses. It can get quite hectic at times when trying to be available in two places at once. Sometimes, I get several calls at the same time, so it is difficult to juggle support requests when that happens.

**Interviewer:** What do you enjoy most about

working at QU?

**Mohamed:** I enjoy my good relationships with faculty and students. I really enjoy working with so many people from so many different backgrounds.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much indeed Mohamed for agreeing to this interview.



# Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al-Thani Museum: A Unique Journey through Time

Hamid Delfi, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

On Saturday, September 28<sup>th</sup> 2019, the Foundation Program Social Events Committee organized a one-day trip to Sheikh Faisal Museum. As scheduled, the bus set off at 10:30 a.m. from Qatar University towards Dukhan Highway, with around 20 faculty, staff, and their families participating in

the event. For some participants, it was a first-time experience, while others were visiting the museum for the second or even third time. The museum provided the group with a tour guide who helped the participants learn about the artifacts in its extensive collection. The participants were

informed of the materials, processes as well as the history behind the artifacts and how they relate to Qatar's cultural and social heritage.

Among others, the visitors found the vintage automobiles, the carpets, the textiles, and the pottery sections

particularly entertaining. The group was also fortunate enough to see old exotic furniture, fossils from the Jurassic era, beautiful tapestries, traditional Qatari houses, and ancient Islamic weapons and armor from various countries. One of the most interesting parts of the visit was pulling up fresh

water from the well at the heart of the museum. Children, in particular, found this experience unique and very intriguing. After a long walk through the museum, it was time to rest, have lunch in the cafeteria, and chat about the day.



A Traditional Qatari House: Photograph courtesy of Mondher Chaaben



# The History of the Foundation Program - Part 3: The English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU): Years 1987-1995

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

In 1987, Qatar University opened a new college on the old campus, The College of Technology, the former teachers' colleges in Madinat Khalifa North. This college had the largest number of students, many of whom were sponsored by Qatar Petroleum or government ministries. In 1990, it was decided that these students would take credit courses in English. In addition to General English, the ELTU instructors taught a variety of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, which included: English for Accounting, English for Management Information Systems (MIS), English for Geographical Information Systems (GIS), English for Sciences, and English for Engineering.

In early 1991, Sheikha Muneera Hamad Al-Thani was appointed Director of the ELTU. Mrs. Amina Al-Jenahi was her chief of office administrator ably assisted by Sheikha Tefla Al-Thani. The two ladies had a warm and welcoming office in the women's building.

1991 was a big year for the ELTU. Following an initiative by Shaikha Muneera, Qatar University ELTU hosted the very first international language symposium held in the Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) region. The theme was 'Recent Developments in English as a Foreign Language: Classroom Applications in the Arabian Gulf'. Keynote speakers came from the UK, the USA, Oman, Hong Kong, Kuwait, Australia, and other countries. The symposium was a grand success and promoted regional interest in professional development practices.

The number of students continued to increase, so more teachers were recruited. The first language instructors were diverse. Teachers were required to have a Bachelor of Art in English Language, English Literature, or Linguistics, or a Bachelor of Education; at least five years teaching-experience was essential.

New programmes were established, including English for Economics in 1991; English for Nursing in 1992, and English for Biomedical Studies in 1994. The latter programmes were headed by Dr. Khalid Al Ali who ran the Biomedical Program. The English for Medical Purposes classes were held in the Nursing Department's prefabricated building near the General Services building. A few years later, the Nursing Department



Women's Main Building (CO4): Photograph courtesy of Mike Richards

was transferred to Madinat Khalifa North campus while the Biomedical English classes remained on campus. The medical English instructors had to teach on both the old and new campuses. Several English for Technology instructors made the same daily commute. Most instructors had fixed blocks of three to four hours a day and were often finished by 1.00 p.m. Quizzes were written by instructors and approved by the respective head of each program. Teachers collaborated to write common exams. There was no committee work.

In June 1995, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani became the new Emir of Qatar. Within days,

he issued an Emiri decree announcing major changes, the most significant of which was changing the six-day school/work week to a five-day week. The Emiri decree was met with much jubilation by students, teachers, and all government employees.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Mrs. Amina Al Jenahi, Ms. Kitty Hogan, Ms. Bettie-Lou Omari, Mr. Mohamed Al Jubouri, Mr. Alaeddin Halwani and Mrs. Magdalena Rostron for sharing their memories.

# Qatar University: English Language Teaching Unit Symposium Pioneer

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Shortly after the inauguration of the QU English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) in fall 1986, the idea was mooted to hold a symposium for English and French language instructors in Qatar. The symposium, entitled *Problems for Reading for Arabic-Speaking Students*, was a three-day event held in March 1987. In their foreword for the published papers of the proceedings, the late Robert Kennedy and his colleague Ian Wilson stated,

“The University of Qatar is proud to present these papers in the belief that the research being undertaken in Qatar into the problems related to the teaching of reading will help achieve the goal expressed by so many of the contributors – that of the relevance of reading will reach beyond the classroom to enrich the lives of the students and people of this country” (p.3).

Local participants to the conference included presenters from Qatar University, the Ministry of Education, the Civil Aviation College, the Army School, and the Police School. This is in addition to presenters from the British Council and the Qatar General Petroleum Company (QGPC) Training Centre, as well as representa-

tives from the American Cultural Centre and the French Cultural Centre.

In his opening address, Dr. Abdulla Al-Kubaisi, the first President of Qatar University, commented,

“The University of Qatar aims to identify those methods and approaches which will help both teachers and students to achieve the goals of English language teaching. Augmentation and exchange of ideas amongst specialists always leads to scientific enrichment on one hand and to depth of serious productive research on the other” (p.8-9).

Presentations, seminars and workshops were held in the conference room of the Administration Building as well as the Men’s Student Activity Building. The wide variety of papers included:

- Simplification of ESP texts by Gerald McGrath
- Reading the unwritten text: Eliciting interpretations of silence by Dr. Neil McEwan
- Towards increasing the reading motivation of students within the educational system in the State of Qatar by Tassula Healy

- Comments on interference problems for French and English language learners by Dr. John Remsbury
- Returning the orthography to ESL: Background to a matter of neglect by Dr. John Phillips
- An examination of the comparative rhetorical structure and information hierarchy systems of English and Arabic by Mr. Stephen Thompson
- The teaching of reading in French by Dr. MuoyvYou

As a follow-up to the symposium, the goal was to establish educational links between QU ELTU and other Gulf universities in order to exchange views, experiences, and ideas

on the teaching of English to Arabic-speaking students. This goal was realized in 1991 and today in 2019 with the 4th annual language conference hosted by Foundation Program Department of English and Qatar University, that prescient recommendation made over thirty years ago has been successfully brought to fruition.

## Acknowledgements

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# Reader's Theatre as a Strategy to Improve Reading and Speaking

David Pearson, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

What if we could make students not only eager to read, but also excited to reread a text again and again till they understand every phoneme and nuance of meaning? A strategy known as Reader's Theatre promises to do just that.

Reader's Theatre is a research-based strategy which draws on the motivational qualities of performance to teach reading fluency. Here is a brief description of the steps involved in creating Reader's Theatre.

- Distribute and introduce the script to the students.
- Have students make predictions about the story or characters.
- Ask students to follow along as you read the script aloud, modeling the appropriate intonation, volume, and pitch as well as varied voice inflections for different characters.
- After you finish, discuss the story and ask feedback questions such as "Were our predictions correct?" "What do you like about the story?" "What can you say about the characters or the setting?"
- Divide the class in smaller groups depending on the size of the script. Everyone should be given an opportunity to read equal parts.
- Allow students to perform informally for their class. They need not memorize the text. They can read it as they perform.

Reader's Theatre turns reading into drama. Rather than students stumbling silently and alone down long dark passages of prose, they are given acting scripts which

they study and then eventually dramatize aloud for their class. These scripts can easily be created from readings that are more traditional.

Reader's Theatre gives students a fun, legitimate reason to reread a text, which is one of the keys to its success. It has the potential to work particularly well among students who enroll at Qatar University because it draws on their enjoyment of speaking to foster their motivation for reading.

Research indicates that, as well as being a highly successful strategy for improving reading fluency in the native language classroom, Reader's Theatre is also highly effective when used with English as a Foreign Language students (Adams et al., 2007; Liu, 2000; Tsou, 2011). Furthermore, repeated reading has been tested and proven as a highly effective strategy for teaching reading fluency (Adams et al., 2007). Why not give Reader's Theatre

a try?

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Visual courtesy of David Pearson

## A New Faculty Member's Perspective

Diana Malabanan, Lecturer of Math, Foundation Program

A year ago, after my interview with the Foundation Program Department of Math Recruitment Committee, I knew in my heart that I would be part of the program. As the days went by, I realized that no matter how much we press

towards our goals and plan the course of our lives, we can never tell what will happen next. It is beyond our control as there is always that crucial element of timing, regardless of how simple or complex a situation is. Indeed, life has

many twists and turns, but with passion and enthusiasm, we have to strive to live the life we have always wanted.

Currently, I have been a member of the Foundation Program Department of Math for four months already, but

Qatar University still continues to amaze me. The warm welcome, organized recruitment process, and continuous support of the Foundation Program are just extraordinary.

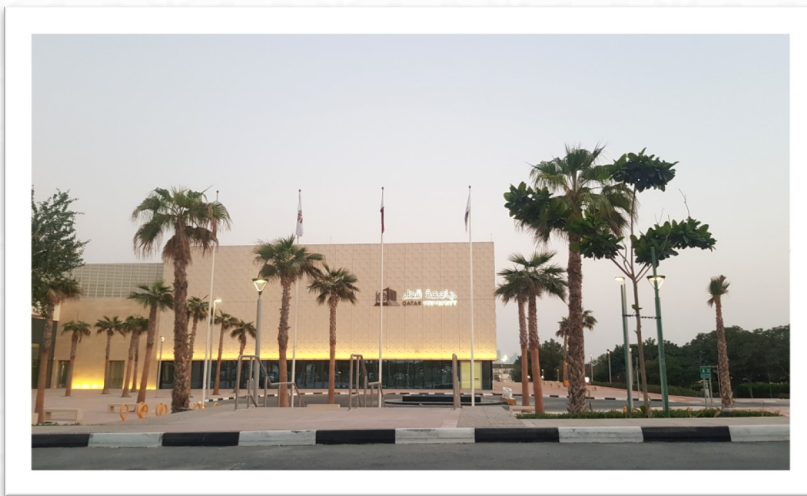
Equally important is the university's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which has been very supportive in my successful integration into the QU community. The series of professional development programs have provided me with a better understanding of Qatar University as a whole. The university offers incredible services, not just to its students, but to its faculty



Diana Malabanan: Photograph courtesy of Maila Bernal

and staff as well.

Relocating to Qatar has been worth the wait. I know that there are still many things that I need to be acquainted with to become not just a more effective educator, but also to be a fully contributing member of a dynamic team.



A First Glance at Qatar University: Photograph courtesy of Deondre Malabanan

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Photograph courtesy of David Bartsch