

# FP Jareeda

## Welcome to Issue 25

James Scotland, Co-chair of the Foundation Program's Newsletter Committee, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Welcome to issue 25 of the Foundation Program's quarterly newsletter, FP Jareeda.

To the delight of many in the Foundation Program (FP), classes and events are currently being delivered on campus.

This issue contains several articles about pedagogy. Paul Ames has explored the benefits of repetition, the importance of accent, and how to build rapport with students.

Raed Marabeh has written about the different online learning tools that are utilized by faculty in the Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM).

Raed Marabeh has also highlighted how the Math Success Zone (MSZ) in the Foundation Program (FP) provides support to at-risk students.

I hope that you enjoy reading issue 25.



Dr. James Scotland: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Ahmad Hazratzad

## In this Issue

A Motivational Video for Special Needs Students 3

FPDM Professional Development Day 4

FPDE Academic Excellence Days 5

Departing Faculty 6

New Faculty 7

Repetition: Say it Again, Repetition 9

The Math Success Zone: Supporting At-Risk Students in Foundation Math 10

How Important is Accent in ELT? 11

Building Rapport with Students: How and Why? 12

Faculty Focus: Conan Kmiciek 13

History of English Language Teaching at QU: The Kennedy Years Part 4 - Student Activities 14

Platforms to Create Math Online Videos 15

## Our Voices Speaking Competition

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Qatar University's Foundation Program (FP) held its first *Our Voices* speaking competition on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November for female students and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2021 for male students. The event was organized by the FP Special Needs Committee (FPSNC) and coordinated by Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas, who is currently the committee chair.

The event provides Special Needs Students (SNS) with an opportunity to participate alongside other students in a speaking competition. The competition's objectives are to ensure the inclusion of SNS, enhance their speaking and presentation skills, and increase their self-confidence and motivation. The competition allows students to give

individual presentations about a topic they choose, with each presentation lasting for 4-6 minutes. Once registered, each student is assigned a trainer who supports them through one-to-one preparation sessions. Each member of the FPSNC has a clear role in organizing the event and in coaching the students.

Fifteen participants presented various topics, including COVID-19 vaccination, robots and humans, pronunciation, and technology in our lives. More specifically, Mohammad Obaido talked inspiringly about his pronunciation problems and how he deals with them by selecting different words that do not contain sounds that he finds difficult. Abdullah Alkuwari talked about replacing phone batteries with small, attachable solar panels, which would thus make chargers redundant.

Abdullah was awarded second place and said that the competition helped him to "...break the barrier of fear of public speaking". Abdullah commented, "It felt so good, but as an ambitious person, I always aim to be the first."

Nowaf Al Qatarbi, an audience member, said, "We have come here to support Abdullah, our classmate. I liked the event because the students were like stars."

The competition winner, Amira Elrewini, stated, "I feel pleased...I did a lot of practice to do this performance. This event developed my language by knowing new strong vocabulary and made me more confident." Amira's presentation was about using robots in healthcare.

Mr. Al Nahas stated, "The event was a success. The participants' perceptions of what they can achieve have improved, and most of them have expressed an interest in participating in



Amira Elrewini, the first place winner: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas



Abdullah Al Kuwari, the second place winner: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas

other events."

Speaking about where the name *Our Voices* came from, Mr. Al Nahas added, "I wanted to give our special needs students some ownership and self-confidence and send a message that they have a strong voice, like everyone else, and are confident to use it."

Thanks to the hard work of the FPSNC members, the event was a resounding success.

It is hoped that the *Our Voices* speaking competition will go from strength to strength in its goal of giving a voice to all students who wish to tell the Qatar University (QU) community about the topics about which they are most passionate. The next competition will be held in Fall 2022.

## A Motivational Video for Special Needs Students

Susan Saafan, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Nobody could have predicted how long COVID-19 would impact teachers and students when we switched to online teaching in March 2020. However, as weeks turned into months of continuous online teaching, the Foundation Program's (FP) Special Needs Committee became concerned about the dwindling attendance rate for the tutoring service. Consequently, a video project was initiated and undertaken by one of the team members, Mr. Mohammed Hosam Al Nahas, to motivate special needs students to attend the committee's tutorial sessions.

The project got underway in September 2021. Over the following three weeks, Mr. Al Nahas created the video content, logistics, script, and accompanying voice-over with the help of a second-year QU student who undertook the actual filming, and Ms. Abeer Hanina, who edited the video. In addition, subtitles for those with hearing impairment problems and a voice-over for those with vision impairment problems were added to further support students.

The objective of the video was to motivate special needs stu-

dents to stay engaged. The storyline shows several scenarios of students working hard, followed by being celebrated at their graduation ceremony. The information about the five Special Needs Committee members and the tutorial sessions is highlighted in captions throughout the video.

Within the video, special needs students are not directly referenced to ensure inclusion and avoid the scenario of special needs students feeling that they have been singled out. The same video has been made available for the rest of the students who use the FP Success Zone as well. Mr. Al Nahas tried his best to use encouraging, motivating, and inclusive language to emphasize that teachers and students work together for the common cause.

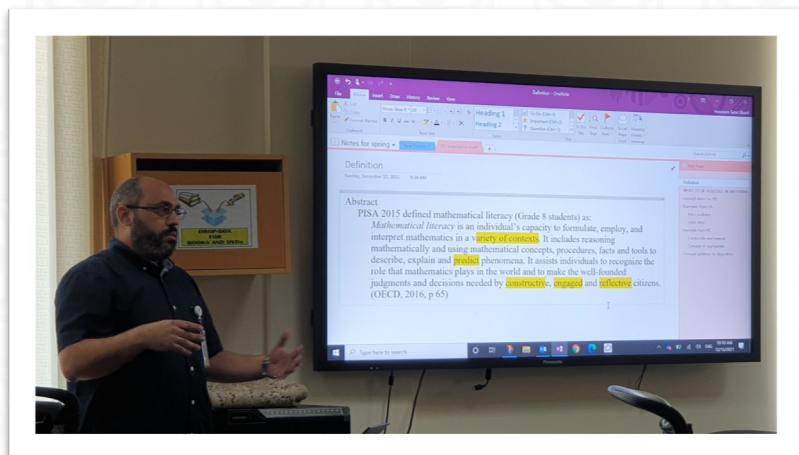
The video was sent through the FP Student Affairs Office, and several students and colleagues who watched it gave highly encouraging and positive feedback. It is another example of how the FP has adapted to an online environment to meet the needs of its students.



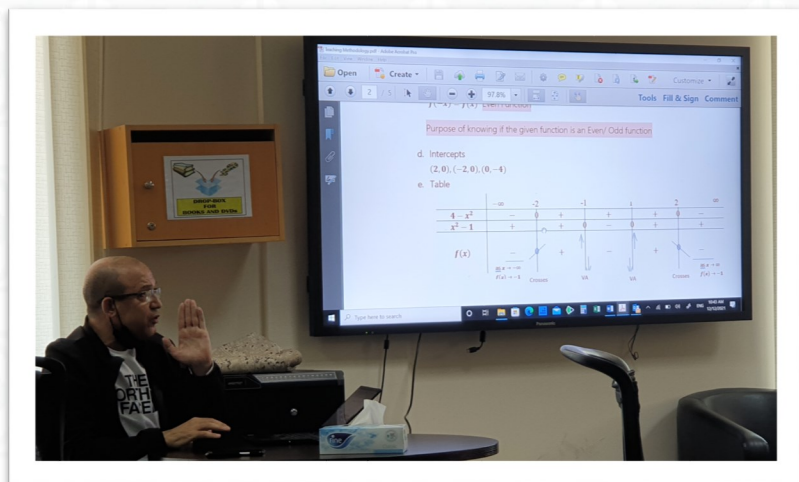
Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas addressing the viewers: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Mohammad Hosam Al Nahas

# FPDM Professional Development Day

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program



Dr. Houssam Elkasti speaking at Math PD day: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Raed Marabeh



Dr. Mohamed Chabi speaking at Math PD day: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Raed Marabeh



Mr. Mahmoud Syam speaking at Math PD day: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Raed Marabeh

The Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM) held its annual Professional Development (PD) Day on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The PD event provided faculty members with the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience. There were seven sessions in total. The PD day was informative and focused primarily on connecting theory with classroom implementation.

Mr. Raed Marabeh gave a talk titled, *Using Echo 360 in Online Learning*. The talk demonstrated the use of Echo 360, showing participants how to put math content online. Other technology-orientated sessions included *How Important is Technology in Education?*, which was given by Mr. Muneer Al-wadi, and *Possibility to use MyMathLabs' Study Plan as Student Centric*, which was given by Mr. Salim Salim.

Dr. Houssam Elkasti gave a talk titled, *Why We Should Teach Mathematical Concepts and Not Only Mathematical Procedures*. In this talk, Dr. Housam Elkasti distinguished between teaching mathematical concepts and mathematical procedures with examples from Elementary Algebra and Pre-Calculus courses. Immediately after that Dr. Mohamed Chabi gave a presentation about, *Teaching Methodology and Lesson Models*, in which he discussed how to implement teaching methods that help students discover mathematical concepts. In his talk, titled *Understanding Co-Teaching*, Mr. Mahmoud Syam discussed the concept and purpose of co-teaching, presenting different classrooms and collaborative teaching models.

Finally, Mr. Mahmoud Syam presented a summary of student performance in pre-calculus exams in the last two academic years. He compared the results with the course objectives and highlighted students' challenges.

Overall, the event was a great success and provided instructors with valuable information, insights, methodology, and ideas to utilize in their classes.

## FPDE Academic Excellence Days

David Pearson, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program, and Naima Sarfraz, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) at Qatar University (QU) hosted their annual FPDE Academic Excellence Days from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> December. The Foundation Program's (FP) Academic Excellence and Professional Development Committee organized a wide range of professional development opportunities for FPDE faculty, focusing on topics such as the use of technology in the classroom, effective classroom instruction, and the creation of valid assessments. There were 22 one-hour sessions over the course of 4 days. Presenters included a number of guest speakers and several faculty members in the FPDE.

The FPDE Academic Excellence Days began with a welcome note by Mr. Musa Abu Huzaima, Department Head of English. That was followed by a session with Dr. Mansoor Al-Surmi, who explained the 2021 Faculty Performance Review and Development System (FPRDS) submission process, including changes from previous years. Finally, the faculty had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss possible issues. Easton Phidd, of the FPDE, talked about an applied framework and online tool that helps teachers assess and improve their use of educational technology in their teaching and learning activities.

There were sessions on Monday following these initial presentations. The sessions covered topics vital for all FPDE faculty. Sessions included a presentation on learning disabilities and how they manifest in the adult brain and practical implications for the classroom. Ms. Ilse Dupreez, the Early Intervention Program (EIP) Coordinator for the Hamad Hospital Child Development Center (CDC), gave the talk. Other sessions included training in blended learning using Microsoft Teams by Ms. Solange Jarjour, a Customer Success Manager in the Middle East Cluster subsidiary and Mr. Abdul Manaf Charalil of Qatar University Information Technology Services (QU-ITS). This presentation was followed by a session on composing effective listening comprehension items by Dr. Dina El-Dakhs, the Linguistics and Translation Department Chair and the Leader of the Applied Linguistics Research Lab at the College of Humanities and Sciences at Prince Sultan University in Saudi Arabia.

Sessions on Tuesday included training on creating valid assessments by Dr. Walid Massoud, Qatar University's Testing Center manager. His presentation was followed by a discussion of a universal design for learning by Ms. Aisha Al-Sinani, Head of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Access Education and Culture Section for Mada (Qatar Assistive Technology Center). After that, there was a session on using Microsoft Teams for formative assessment by Ms. Solange Jarjour and Mr. Abdul Manaf Charalil. Finally, there was a session on writing valid multiple-choice questions, focusing on writing good distractors, by Dr. Dina El-Dakhs.

Wednesday's sessions included a talk by Dr. Enita Barrett, of the FPDE, on maximizing the use of assistive devices (AD) to enhance language learning experiences. In addition, Ms. Solange Jarjour and Mr. Abdul Manaf Charalil provided training on interactive meetings through Microsoft Teams. Mr. Martin Curtis, a Garnet Publishers Representative, presented a series of three sessions on classroom management during the event. FP faculty also gave presentations on a variety of other topics.

On Thursday, the faculty had several excellent sessions to choose from, including a lecture on reframing cognitive perceptions to build resilience in the face of constant change by David Finrock of the FPDE. Pamela Johnson of Pearson Publishers also gave a lecture on the global scale of English (GSE), a metric that can be used to place students in a program and monitor their progress over an instructional period. Mr. Keith Drummond, Mrs. Shamsa Alrushaidi and Mr. Fasil Yitbarek, of the FPDE, shared their best practices with the attendees. Mr. Shuja Ashfaq, Section Head of Network and Telecommunications, Information Technology Services Department, presented an engaging session title, *WebEx Advance Teaching & Learning Features*.

The FPDE Academic Excellence Days were a great success, with over 100 people attending each day.

## Departing Faculty

### Quinn Riebock

“Education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage.” Paolo Freire

Dear members of the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), I want to express my gratitude. Before working at Qatar University (QU), I knew almost nothing about QU. I had never traveled past Europe or made friends with anyone who had roots in an Arabic-speaking context. I have learned more than I could have imagined during my three years here. I am blessed because of the time that I have worked, lived, and grown to know you and this place.

I have felt supported, encouraged, and enjoyed many laughs. As a result, I leave inspired, having grown and been enriched by so many kind and incredible souls. My most special thanks go to the Teaching Assistants in the FP English Success Zone; you have made every day meaningful, thoughtful, and fun. I am truly blessed and better because I know each of you and continue forward as your friend. My advice to all of you is to get to know this amazing group of talented people. Have the courage as educators to learn and love.

Please keep my family in your thoughts and prayers as we move back to Costa Rica. I will be working at an International Baccalaureate (IB) school as their English and Spanish Language Acquisition Coordinator. Furthermore, I will continue to train teachers in Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) certification as I have done in the past. Thank you again.



Ms. Quinn Riebock: Photograph courtesy of Ms. Quinn Riebock



Mr. Kashif Raza: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Kashif Raza

### Kashif Raza

I have had the pleasure to serve Qatar University (QU) for most of my professional life as a faculty member, researcher, presenter and faculty senator. I am thankful to QU for trusting in my abilities as an English instructor and allowing me to serve the institute and contribute to its development. QU has been, and will always remain, close to my heart. I was hired as a fresh graduate from Oklahoma City University in 2013. As this was my first full-time job after graduation, most of the teaching, research and leadership experiences and skills I gained started here. As a young researcher who is particularly interested in the language education of Arab students, I believe that QU's Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) should lead research on Qatari English language learners at national and international levels. I am thankful for all the support the institution and the FPDE have provided in my academic and non-academic endeavors. I am always pleased to acknowledge their role in my articles, book chapters, and other publications and my co-edited volume on language policy and planning in globalized contexts. As I have represented QU at local, regional, and international conferences and events, QU will remain part of my professional identity. I have particularly enjoyed working with colleagues from different backgrounds and students with diverse abilities. I will always remember this relationship with QU and the FPDE as it has shaped my professional career.

## New Faculty

### Suzanne Mohamed

I joined the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) in January 2022. I am happy to be here. It is such a professional and productive work environment, yet very friendly and warm.

I came from Ottawa, Canada, where it is now -20 degrees Celsius to +20 degrees here in Doha. I am enjoying this beautiful sunny weather, but I know that summer here is a different story.

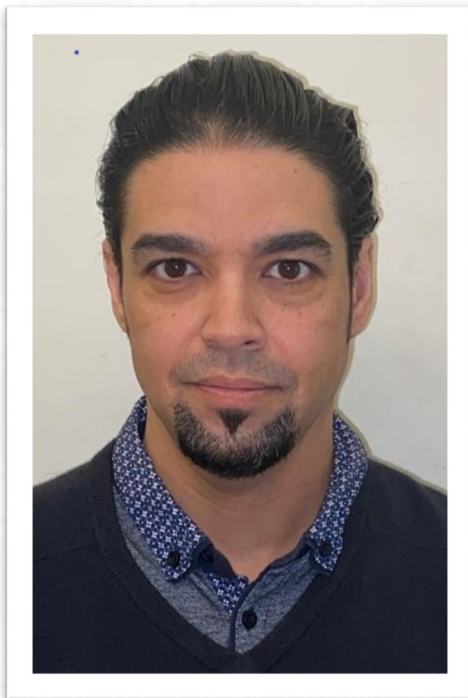
I immigrated to Canada as a young adult, where I started my English teaching career. I have a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) diploma and a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Ottawa. I taught English as a second language (ESL) and English for academic purposes (EAP) for more than ten years at a community college in Ottawa. In addition to teaching, I have experience in language assessment. I have worked for the British Council as an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examiner. In addition, I have been trained to use many other Canadian language assessment tools.

I have a passion for teaching, and the things that I really enjoy the most are simplifying knowledge for learners and creating a supportive environment for them to learn and develop their skills.

I love baking desserts and lately have become interested in food photography. I would love to share my desserts with you once it is safe to meet in person again!



Ms. Suzanne Mohamed: Photograph courtesy of Ms. Suzanne Mohamed



Mr. Nur Benson: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Nur Benson

### Nur Benson

My name is Nur Benson, and I am from London in the United Kingdom. My English career began informally in Egypt when I was asked by some Japanese students of Arabic if I could give them some rudimentary English lessons to which I agreed. The students were very motivated and worked hard. It was a very enjoyable experience, and from those humble beginnings began an English career, which has spanned Japan, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and now Qatar.

I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Modern Languages from the University of Westminster in London with English Literature as my specialty subject. I have a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) from International House, London and a Master of Arts degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the Institute of Education University of London. I have mainly taught young adults, and the majority of my teaching career has been in the Middle East.

I like reading, travelling, sports, the sea and the desert. I have received a very warm welcome from colleagues here in the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) of Qatar University (QU) and I really appreciate all the support. I am very happy to be here and look forward to contributing to the development of the next generation.

## Imad Al-Hawamdeh

It is my pleasure to be here at Qatar University (QU) as a lecturer in the Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE). Since 2006, I have been involved in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), lecturing, and academic and cultural advising. I hold a Master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

I have over 20 years of teaching experience. In 2001, I started teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Jordan. From 2009 to 2012, I taught at the American Language Institute at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Then from 2012 to 2017, I taught at the INTO Oregon State University, a comprehensive program designed to prepare students for university studies and fundamentally similar to the FPDE here at Qatar University.

I have also been involved in curriculum design. I founded a 5-level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program that bridges students directly into a number of Canadian universities and colleges, including Trent University and St Clair College. The program integrated The Canadian Language Benchmarks and was accredited by Languages Canada.

My teaching philosophy has evolved over the years to be more focused on post-methodology and "mindful teaching". I have come to realize that "less is more" in teaching. I am interested in doing more research on post-method teaching and The Thoughtful Classroom Teacher Effectiveness Framework, a system for observing, evaluating, and refining classroom practice.

I consider myself to be a teacher-scholar. I strongly believe that reflective practice and a strong research agenda form the backbone of effective teaching. Professionally, I have presented and co-presented at the TESOL conventions in Philadelphia and Portland as well as at many other conferences in the US. I also like to share my work and learn from the experiences of other lecturers. Much of my work in ESL underpins my belief that when educators collaborate, extraordinary things can be achieved.



Mr. Imad Al-Hawamdeh: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Imad Al-Hawamdeh





# Repetition: Say it Again, Repetition

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

The concept of using repetition as a teaching tool in the classroom is perhaps a topic that is not given much prominence in the professional development programs of language-learning institutions. This may be surprising given the extent of its coverage in the relevant literature, which suggests it has a valuable role to play in language learning.

In terms of language meaning, Kramsch (2009) claims that there has been a shift in the traditional teaching devices used for language learning such as memorizing and recital, moving instead to a focus on what she terms, 'repeated utterances' which are 'resignified', and which can add new layers of meaning to what is being said (p. 209). Thornbury (2012) simplifies this by claiming that just the act of repeating something can give it an extra or contrasted significance. Regarding fluency, Roberts (2012) shares an example of her

efforts at learning Polish while living in Poland and having virtually the same conversation with taxi drivers every day. In this repeated context, she greatly improved her accuracy, repertoire, and fluency to the point that a casual observer might believe she was fluent. However, outside of the 'taxi context', in contexts that could not be repeated as regularly, her Polish lacked the same polish, so to speak.

Repetition, however, is not restricted to just communicative activities. Thornbury (2012) advocates the use of repetition across all types of classroom activities, while Swift (n.d.) suggests recycling such activities, primarily to aid review and absorption of learnt knowledge. Like Roberts, Bygate (2018, p. 334) discusses the connection between the 'repetition of encounters with a task that involves re-using the same content with the same

overall purpose' with 'the growing mastery of both the task and of relevant language' by the language user.

Teachers may be concerned that the repetition of tasks will result in student boredom. To avoid this, Swift (n.d.) recommends changing student partners and/or varying the task to enhance the challenge and increase motivation. Thornbury (2012) suggests that each time the task is attempted, reduce the amount of task support and/or the time permitted to complete it.

The benefits of repetition involving different types of classroom tasks do seem to be apparent and, just as important, achievable, provided that some time is given to incorporate those tasks into the teaching schedule.

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Visual courtesy of Pixabay

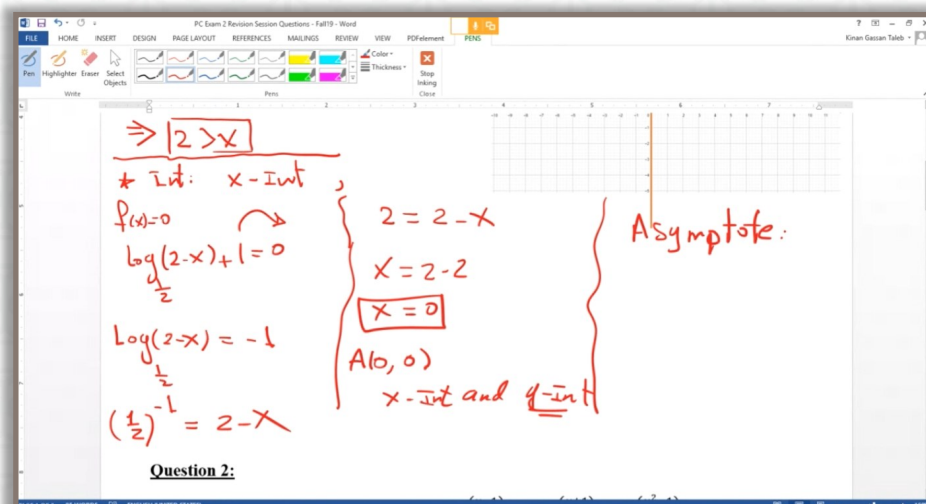
# The Math Success Zone: Supporting At-Risk Students in Foundation Math

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

The Math Success Zone (MSZ) in the Foundation Program (FP) provides different services to support math students in FP. Services include one-to-one tutoring, intensive revision sessions, providing supplementary resources, recording revision videos, and running exam revision sessions before major exams.

MSZ members strive to use various means of support to improve foundation students' math levels and enhance their math skills. However, MSZ members focus particularly on one major group of students: those who are considered at-risk. At-risk students may be those who are repeating a course or those who obtained low grades in previous math courses.

MSZ monitors the needs of at-risk students using a variety of communication strategies. Then, the team assists each individual based on their unique needs.



Online tutoring session through Blackboard Collaborate Ultra: Visual courtesy of Mr. Raed Marabeh.

Regular communication takes place through weekly emails about the math resources prepared. In addition, the MSZ creates teams in Microsoft Teams for these at-risk students. Finally, students

who fall behind and have poor attendance rates receive a phone call from the MSZ.

MSZ members meet regularly with at-risk students. The MSZ tutors give them specific advice on approaching their math courses, setting out a clear study plan, and how to use the available resources. Furthermore, after the midterm exams, the MSZ tutors host online meetings with students who did not pass the exam in order to provide specific and individualized feedback.

There is a weekly hour allocated mainly for practicing and revising math problems in Foundation math courses. During this time, students revisit what they have learned throughout the semester. They work in groups and individually. All teaching assistants work closely with the at-risk students based on the guidelines received from their class teacher.

To conclude, the MSZ provides several levels of support for at-risk students and will continue to strive to meet their needs.



Visual courtesy of Unsplash

# How Important is Accent in ELT?

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Many years ago, a couple of weeks into my first job as an English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher, while teaching Iranian and Emirati students in Dubai, the school's director walked into the class and asked for a word. I told the students to relax and then had a 2-3 minute chat with the director at the front of the class. When I turned back to the students, their mouths were agape. "Mr. Paul, which language were you both speaking then?!"

According to the students, the director, from California, and I, from Manchester, were clearly speaking a form of English they had never heard and did not understand. It struck me that I must be modifying my accent when speaking English with the students. Why would I do that? Did other teachers do it? And is it important?

There is an abundance of literature concerning the importance, or not, of accent when teaching EFL. Much of that literature focuses on which varieties of accent that learners should be exposed to, and what learners' perceptions are of the different accents that they are exposed to. Thornbury (2012) considers accent a moot point, claiming that there is a close connection between accents and the identity of individuals and groups of people; therefore, choosing to teach one accent over another is akin to valuing one group of people over another. Isaacs and Trofimovich (2017) state that for some learners, being easily understood trumps which variety of accent they learn. Jenkins (2008) posits that second language acquisition is about how what is being gained, as such, an accent "increases learners' choices by expanding their phonological repertoires" (p.208). Arboleda and Garcés

(2012) suggest that while a native-like accent is important, it is by no means the exclusive indicator influencing positive learning outcomes.

From a learner's perspective, Tokumoto and Shibata (2011) claim that learners desire the prestige of a native-like accent; some want to avoid discrimination in the workplace and in society (Lippi-Green, 2012); and others believe it enhances their future employment prospects. From a teacher's perspective, sounding native-like appears to confer a number of benefits. Tsang's (2019) study indicates that first language accents were generally viewed more positively than second language accents by learners. Some non-native accents were linked with lower student attention spans; and some learners reported that exposure to some teachers' inexact pronunciations later gave rise to embarrassing situations and failures in communicating. If this is the case, it may explain why some native-like speakers enjoy preferential treatment such as higher pay and better perks than their non-native counterparts (Park 2012).

Is accent important? The answer appears to be 'yes' for those individual learners who deem it as an essential component that provides them with what they actually want from their language learning. For teachers, the answer may depend on what extent they perceive accent as being central to their learners' needs.

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# Building Rapport with Students: How and Why?

Paul Ames, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

Teachers often hear about the importance of building rapport with their students and the advantages that it offers to the learning process. However, what is rapport? How do you 'get' it? When do you get it? And what does it do?

Defining rapport is not easy. Thornbury (2012) relates a tale from his days as a Diploma of English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA) assessor and his struggles explaining to new teachers what rapport actually is pertaining to DELTA assessment criteria. Scrivener (2005, as cited in Thornbury, 2012) states rapport 'is notoriously difficult to define or quantify'. However, Scrivener (2005, as cited in Thornbury, 2012) also refers to rapport as the creation of a positive learning environment. Benson et al. (2005, as cited in Ryan & Wilson, 2015) claim that rapport encompasses reciprocal trust, making connections, and emotional harmony.

Fostering student rapport may not come naturally to all teachers. Nonetheless, the literature suggests that if rapport is not instinctive, it can be 'achieved'. Gorham and Christophel (1990, as cited in Ryan & Wilson, 2015) espouse the idea of 'immediacy' whereby teachers signal to their students, using verbal and nonverbal techniques, that they are 'available' to them. This may simply entail the teacher smiling, showing humor, using personalization, and being active. Scrivener (2005, as cited in Thornbury, 2012) and Harmer (2007, as cited in Thornbury, 2012) suggest other simple steps that teachers can take, such as being fair with all students and actually listening to them. Harmer (2005, as cited in Thornbury, 2012) adds teachers should recognize their students and know their names.

While building rapport with students may not necessarily result in learning taking place, it does appear to make a positive learning outcome more likely, with benefits to teachers and students alike. For example, fostering a caring relationship with students can inform various stakeholders in the education process in developing teacher-training programs (Raza & Coombe, 2021). According to McKeachie, (2011, as cited in Dyrenforth, 2014), rapport motivates learners and makes learning more enjoyable and satisfying. Students can also achieve better grades and are more likely to study, which in turn motivates teachers and improves their well-being (Wasley, 2006, as cited in Dyrenforth, 2014).

With all of these perceived advantages, it is perhaps not surprising that Thornbury (2012) claims 'the rapport factor almost always outshone all other factors' of the DELTA assessment criteria 'and made up for any number of infelicities in the actual design and implementation of a lesson'.

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## Faculty Focus: Conan Kmiecik

Kenneth Downes, Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

**Interviewer:** Good morning, Conan. You recently became the Lead for Program Administration, Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE), so it seems fitting to inquire a little about your background and role in the department.

**Mr. Kmiecik:** Well, I have been living and working in Qatar for the past five years. During this time, I have served as an English Lecturer in the Embedded courses. My first semester here, I was given three preparation classes. One of those classes was English for Business Communication (ENGL 252). I really enjoyed the course and continued to teach the course over the next couple of semesters. When the co-lead position for the course became available, I applied and was selected. Then, when the course lead resigned in the Fall 2020 semester, I was promoted to lead. I have been quite happy with my involvement with ENGL 252 and its development. I have a reputation for being organized, expedient with task completion, and creative with my ideas. These skills have helped me throughout my career and continue to help me in my current roles.

**Interviewer:** Could you tell us a little about your professional background before joining the FPDE?

**Mr. Kmiecik:** Before coming to Qatar, I lived and worked in the United States in various roles in international education. My first Master's Degree is in English Language and Literature, and I started my career in higher education as a composition instructor. While teaching at my alma mater, Winona State University, I also began pursuing a Master's in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Then I shifted roles to an English as second language (ESL) instructor and worked as the program coordinator for an intensive English program. After changing institutional workplaces, I was tasked with developing short-term programs and then worked as an International Student Advisor. In addition, I issued student visas and maintained compliance with Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) at our institution.

**Interviewer:** What led you to Qatar University (QU)?

**Mr. Kmiecik:** Well, I applied at a dozen institutions. Qatar University was one of them, and they offered me the most intriguing opportunity. This is my first time living and working outside of the United States.

**Interviewer:** What have been some memorable moments here for you?

**Mr. Kmiecik:** My sons came to spend the break with me in my



Mr. Conan Kmiecik: Photograph courtesy of Mr. Conan Kmiecik

second winter here. That was special. My mother was also able to spend a week with me. She still posts pictures of her trip here.

**Interviewer:** What do you enjoy most about working at QU?

**Mr. Kmiecik:** There have been between 110-120 faculty members working in the department since I started here. In my first semester here, I would sit at a table in the D05 atrium in between my classes and work. Faculty would stop by, chat, and share advice. I have always enjoyed the collegial nature of our department. Additionally, so many of our colleagues have unique skills and expertise. This inspires me to challenge myself, develop new skills, and take on more roles.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for speaking with me today. The team wishes you continued success in your role.

**Mr. Kmiecik:** Thank you. My wish is that I enable more success for the team through my role.

# History of English Language Teaching at QU: The Kennedy Years Part 4 - Student Activities

Elisabeth Szewczyk-Méziane, Former Lecturer of English, Foundation Program

From its inauguration in September, 2004, the Foundation English Department (FED<sup>1</sup>) has fully supported learning outside the classroom. Student Services was very active and initiated many opportunities for students to improve their language skills. In 2009, Ms. Kira Litvin replaced Ms. Allyson Young as Student Services Coordinator and Student Learning Centers (SLC) administrator. Student Services offered diverse opportunities such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) skills workshops and tutorials to students to provide them with intensive exam preparation and practice. In addition, Mr. Peter McFarquar ran the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) tutorial sessions.

In 2009, FED Student Services also introduced a student peer-tutoring program; those who participated did a splendid job. The peer-tutoring initiative and initiative, FED support labs, and other student clubs and societies established by FED Student Services proved so successful that Qatar University (QU) Student Services decided to offer them under their auspices for all students. One very successful program was the FED Writing Labs run by Ms. Anita Ghajar-Selim, who was later appointed as Head of the new QU Writing Centre services.

Student excursions and field trips were introduced in 2006 and remained very popular. Students attended the BBC—Al Jazeera sponsored Qatar Debates held at Qatar Foundation (QF). Other popular excursions included: the Museum of Islamic Art, Aspire Zone Active Women's Fitness program, Shafallah, and the Post Office. One special trip was the British Council and the Qatar Ministry of Culture

photographic exhibition, *My Father's House*, held at Souk Waqef. The event featured photographs on the architecture of the Gulf, demonstrating how architecture, particularly iconic buildings, can reflect and develop a nation's culture, heritage and sense of identity. One very exciting trip was visiting the Doha Zoo in Al Azizya shortly before it closed. Trips were also organized to the annual Al Jazeera Documentary Film Festival held at the Sheraton Hotel.

The SLC student clubs included the Movie Lab and Arabic calligraphy classes taught by Mr. Heshmi Hamadi. The Japanese Club, supervised by Mr. Mathew Vetrini, held a Japanese film festival collaborating with the Japanese Embassy. Qatar-Debate Student Services delivered public speaking workshops with a cadre of international debate coaches teaching students how to use persuasive arguments and structure a public talk or speech. Expert photographer Mr. Ahmad Hazratzad ran the Photography Society and organized a popular student photographic competition and exhibition held in the Women's Foundation Building as well as 51 East in Laguna Mall.

The first ever QU talent competition, held in December 2010 at Ibn Khaldoun Hall, was one exciting FED event. Mr. Hardie Cooper proposed that the FED hold a talent competition. FED Director, Dr. Khalid Al Ali, was very supportive of the initiative, *Foundation Has Got Talent*, and so the organizing team got underway. Students were very keen to show off their talent. One student showcased her writing and artistic abilities in a slideshow drama entitled *Hurt Love*; another did a modern dance solo. Several students narrated

poems and short stories. Three students performed the dabka, the traditional folk dance of Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria, to wild applause. The panel of judges included Ms. Fatima Al Ali, a representative of Blue Salon, one of the competition sponsors. Blue Salon offered luxury toiletries and perfume gifts for all the competition participants. The event also included a raffle draw for a meal at the Mykonos Restaurant at The Intercontinental Hotel. The event was deemed a great success, and it was hoped more would follow.

Throughout his tenure as FED HoD, Mr. Robert Kennedy actively support all faculty activity initiatives, student clubs, and events. These provided students with a variety of opportunities to speak and use English outside of classroom walls. The immense popularity of the clubs and activities eventually garnered the interest of Qatar University Student Services which then decided to provide and adopt many of these initiatives under their own auspices. Once again, the Foundation Program (FP) left its indelible mark on Qatar University far beyond the walls of the FP itself thanks to the creativity, hard work, and dedication of its instructors.

## Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Mr. Hardie Cooper, Mr. Ahmad Hazratzad, Dr. Ali Ahmed, and Mr. David Ingels for reviewing the article and sharing their memories.

<sup>1</sup> The Foundation Program Department of English (FPDE) was known as the Foundation English Department (FED) from 2004 to 2012.

# Platforms to Create Math Online Videos

Raed Marabeh, Teaching Assistant of Math, Foundation Program

The Foundation Program Department of Math (FPDM) faculty employs numerous online learning tools to supplement classroom instruction. One of these tools is online videos. Accessing videos online allows learners to pause, rewind, and take notes according to their own pace. In addition, many educational platforms are available to help create online, high-quality, effective videos. In this article, I will present three platforms that can be used to create Math videos.

First of all, Blackboard Collaborative Ultra is a video conferencing tool that offers instructors the option of adding files,

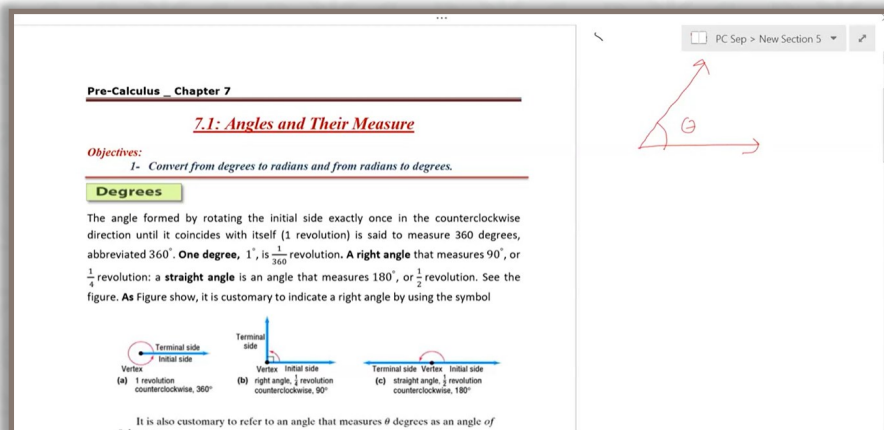
sharing applications, and using a virtual whiteboard to interact with students. Blackboard Collaborative Ultra also enables teachers to record virtual sessions and share them with students as videos. One of the main advantages of these tools is that they can be accessed through a browser, so students do not need to install any software to record or join a session.

Secondly, Edpuzzle is a tool for editing online videos and adding interactive content to specific learning objectives. Users can upload their videos or import videos from online resources (e.g., YouTube). In

addition, teachers can also track student performance online.

Finally, Echo360 is a lecture capture system. It records computer screens. Echo360 overcomes the issue of saving and uploading large video files by automatically saving the recorded video into an online library. Echo360 has many advantages, including embedding the Echo360 videos to Blackboard, tracking and analyzing the video views, and the advantage of editing videos easily. For example, in the Spring 2021 semester, Math Success Zone (MSZ) recorded more than 40 supplementary videos using Echo360. These videos were uploaded to Blackboard and viewed 71,188 times by students.

In conclusion, online videos can be used to supplement classroom instruction. FPDM faculty will continue to seek innovative ways to meet the needs of its students to ensure their success and enhance their learning experience.



Using Echo360 during a math class: Visual courtesy of Mr. Raed Marabeh



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