The 1st Saudi Scientific Publishing Conference at King Khalid University (SSPC-KKU)

Abha, KSA, January 28-30, 2014

In this Issue

The 1st Saudi Scientific Publishing Conference (SSPC-KKU), held at Graiger Campus, Deanship of Scientific Research, King Khalid University, Abha, KSA, on 28-30 January 2014, under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Khalid, the governor of 'Asir province.

The conference covered a set of vital domains, such as the current situation of scientific publishing in Saudi Arabia, Ethics of scientific publishing, Electronic scientific publishing, Scientific publishing in Legal Sciences and Islamic Studies, Scientific publishing in Human sciences, Scientific publishing in educational sciences, Scientific Publishing in Natural and Applied Sciences and Scientific Publishing in Health Sciences.

The conference put high on its agenda several key objectives, including: evaluating the current situation of scientific publishing in Saudi Arabia and its related challenges. Also, special focus was given to setting an effective mechanism to ensure full utilization of modern technology in scientific publishing; while maintaining objectivity, authenticity and reliability. In the same vein, the conference elaborated on devising a process for an integrated use of human and material resources among various research centers across the Kingdom. Hence, techniques for complete use of recommendations and results from published researches in applied fields were pinpointed. Moreover, the conference planned to establish a set of general goals that determine the direction of scientific publishing in different fields.

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The National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAA): A Brief Introduction

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"The reviews of institutions and of programs will deal with all the activities of an institution including an overview of the quality of its programs, the facilities, and services to support them."

*T*o standardize the educational system and meet global needs, the Higher Council of Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established the National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAA) in 1424 AH. The primary objective of the Commission is to encourage, support and evaluate the quality assurance processes of higher educational institutions in order to achieve quality learning at International standards. It also aims to continue improvement in academic accomplishments and to assist institutions in achieving those improvements.

NCAAA has the responsibility to correct the policy of academic standards and accreditation of all higher educational institutions and their programs. "The Commission's responsibilities relate to quality issues, which include the resources available, processes followed, the quality of services provided and the quality of students learning."

To achieve the goals, the commission has established eleven broad standards for accreditation and quality assurance. They are as follows:

A. Institutional Context
1. Mission and Objective
2. Governance and Administration
3. Management of Quality Assurance and Improvement

B. Quality of Learning and Teaching
4. Learning and Teaching

C. Support for Student Learning
5. Student Administration and Support Services
6. Learning Resources

D. Supporting Infrastructure
7. Facilities and Equipment
8. Financial Planning and Management
9. Employment Processes

E. Community Contributions
10. Research
11. Institutional Relationships with the Community

The Commission has also developed a national qualifications framework "that specifies generic standards of learning outcomes for each level of qualifications." The principle elements in the framework follow as:

• **Levels:** Levels numbered and linked to qualification titles to describe increasing intellectual demand and complexity of learning expected as students progress to higher academic levels.

• **Credits:** Points allocated to describe the amount of work or volume of learning expected for an academic award or units or other components of a program.

• **Domains of Learning:** The broad categorizes types of learning outcomes that a program is intended to develop.

According to the sources of the Ministry of Higher Education website, "the qualification titles and levels are consistent with current practice in the Kingdom ranging from a diploma/associate degree after a minimum of 60 credit hours (two years of post secondary study) to a doctorate. The normal full-time load for a student is 15 credit hours per semester but up to 18 credit hours may be acceptable."

"The domains of learning describe broad categories of learning outcomes in four broad areas with a fifth, psychomotor skills, added in particular fields of study where this kind of learning is important. The domains are:

• **knowledge,** the ability to recall, understand and present information, including:
- knowledge of specific facts,
- knowledge of concepts, principles and theories, and
- knowledge of procedures.

• **cognitive skills**, the ability to:
- apply conceptual understanding of concepts, principles, theories and
- apply procedures involved in critical thinking and creative problem solving, both when asked to do so, and when faced with unanticipated new situations.

• **interpersonal skills and responsibility**, including the ability to:
- take responsibility for their own learning and continuing personal and professional development,
- work effectively in groups and exercise leadership when appropriate,
- act responsibly in personal and professional relationships,
- act ethically and consistently with high moral standards in personal and public forums.

• **communication, information technology and numerical skills**, including the ability to:
- communicate effectively in oral and written forms,
- use information and communications technology, and
- use basic mathematical and statistical techniques.

Psychomotor skills involving manual dexterity that is extremely important in some fields of

study; for example, very high levels of psychomotor skills are required for a surgeon, an artist, or a musician.

The Commission insists on establish internal quality assurance units in the institutions that ensure the quality of programs in terms of above-mentioned standards for accreditation and quality assurance and national qualifications framework. The Quality assurance processes in institutions also involve "facilities and equipment, staffing" and the administration of the institutions.

The institutional-based quality assurance systems are required to frame a policy "in relation to appropriately defined institutional mission statements, and short term and long term planning and reporting procedures based on evidence of quality of performance." Periodic reports must be prepared to assess performance and the improvement in the strategic plan. The institutions will be reviewed once every five years. Programs will also need to be re-accredited on a five-yearly basis.

The Commission has two Quality Assurance Processes: Internal Quality Assurance Processes and External Assurance Processes.

Internal Quality Assurance Processes

"For an existing institution that does not yet have such a system, arrangements for internal quality assurance would normally start with the establishment of a quality center, appointment of key staff to that centre and appointment of a quality committee drawn from all sections of the institution. This center would involve people across the institution in an initial self evaluation, which would provide a starting-point for plans for improvement where necessary and the introduction of required quality assurance processes." It has the responsibility "for its own quality assurance involves assessing itself against appropriate stand-ards using external benchmarks or reference points. These may be descriptions of standards provided by the Commission, benchmarks relating to the performance of other comparable institutions within Saudi Arabia or elsewhere, or the opinions of independent evaluators with relevant experience in post secondary education."

External Quality Assurance Processes

External quality assurance involves accreditation of institutions and programs if they meet required quality standards. Trained and experienced reviewers will study the documented information of institutions, visit institutions and provide advice to the Commission. It will go through several processes.

"For new institutions assessments by the Commission will occur at two stages. First, when a proposal to establish a new institution is being considered, the Commission will review the plans. This review is designed to ensure that if the plans are properly implemented the institution and its quality assurance systems is likely to meet required standards and that programs will meet accreditation requirements. At that stage the institution and its programs will receive provisional accreditation, and if the plans also meet the standards established by the relevant Ministry a license will be given to allow it to begin operating. The second stage occurs after the institution is established and the programs have been offered for the first time. The Commission will carry out a further assessment to ensure that plans were properly and fully implemented and that standards are being met. Full institutional and program accreditation may then be given. After full accreditation, programs will need to be re-accredited every five years. External reviews of the institution will also be conducted on a five-yearly basis. (While a five year cycle will be the norm, the Commission may at its discretion require an external review at an earlier time)."

"For existing institutions, the Commission will conduct initial reviews of institutions and programs following a planned schedule. This schedule will be developed in consultation with institutions, with the reviews commencing as the necessary internal processes have been put in place and initial self-studies completed. The accreditation may be either provisional or full, depending on the stage the institution has reached in developing its quality assurance processes. After institutions and programs have been accredited, the same process will be followed as for new institutions. Programs will need to be re-accredited every five years and external reviews of the institutions will also be conducted on a five yearly basis. As for private institutions, the Commission may conduct earlier reviews if it believes it needs to do so."

The reviews of institutions and of programs will deal with all the activities of an institution including an overview of the quality of its programs, the facilities, and services to support them.

"To ensure that these different types of reviews are effectively coordinated and do not result in unnecessary additional work for institutions, several steps will be taken. Firstly, while the focus of program reviews will be on individual programs, arrangements may be made for considering groups of related programs at the same time. Secondly, wherever possible the timing of external program and institutional reviews will be coordinated. In small institutions with only a small number of programs, the reviews may be combined so that work on preparation of material need be done only once rather than duplicated. Alternatively, for a large institution with many different programs, the reviews may be spaced apart to minimize the amount of work required at any particular time. These arrangements will be discussed with institutions at the time when reviews are scheduled. The reports on reviews that have been undertaken will be made available to the members of later review panels so that they are aware of comments and recommendations that have been made."

Student-centeredness in EFL Classes

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> "Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is known as the most innovative approach to language teaching, is based on the principle that students should be more engaged than the teacher."

The idea that the teacher talks and the students take notes has become obsolete when it comes to language teaching. The success of a lesson depends primarily on the extent to which the students are involved in the learning process. In an effective lesson the teacher is almost invisible, one who successfully engages the students in different activities and handles problems tactfully. In reality, the teacher is fully involved in teaching without obtrusively being involved; as if he or she is not there. In this particular article, I will focus on the essence of student-centeredness.

The idea of student-centeredness implies that students should talk more often than their teacher does even if they know less. This contradicts the traditional view of language teaching and emphasizes that students are more engaged than their teacher because they are learning not, the teacher. To be more specific, a teacher's lectures, explanations and instructions are often a waste of time if the students have little involvement in the learning process.

In general, a typical English teacher tends to begin a lesson with his robust starter, "Today we will learn past simple tense" or "Our lesson today is reading for gist". Such openings, no doubt, are very likely to discourage the students, making the lesson daunting because of a feeling of 'having to do something' instead of 'taking part in something interesting'. Instead, a teacher can use some pictures (of course, suitable to the students' culture) relevant to the target language and ask them to talk about what they can see, or tell an interesting story, which doesn't take long but at least generates students' interest. This is called a 'lead-in' or 'warm-up', which takes no more

than five to seven minutes – almost the time we spend on our boring introductory lecture by shouting, which intimidates the students, often goes over their heads and eventually harms the most valuable asset our <u>voice</u> (sound box). An engaging lesson, thus, always begins with something which interests the learners.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is known as the most innovative approach to language teaching, is based on the principle that students should be more engaged than the teacher. In this regard, Richards and Rodgers' opinion deserves mention.

"CLT procedures often require teachers to acquire less teacher-centered classroom management skills."
Richard and Rodgers (1995: 78)

When a teacher tries to minimize teacher-centeredness, the classroom automatically becomes student-centered. In a language classroom where the students have substantial involvement, language input becomes stronger. The importance of student-centeredness is found in Harmer, and Scrivener as well, who put emphasis on reducing teacher-talking time (TTT) and enhancing student-talking time (STT).

"The best lessons, therefore, are ones where STT is maximized, but where at appropriate moments during the lesson the teacher is not afraid to summarize what is happening, tell a story or enter into discussion, etc."
(Harmer, 2009:27)

"TTT is actually time when the learners are not doing very much and are not very involved."
(Scrivener, 2005: 85)

Blended Courses in the English Department: Student Perspectives

Goal 1 of the Saudi National Center for E-learning and Distance Learning, an affiliate of the Ministry of Higher Education, is "to spread e-learning applications and solutions in all higher education institutions in accordance with the best quality standards." King Khalid University is one of the leading Saudi universities that have recently adopted this new mode of teaching/learning with much of zeal and enthusiasm at the training, support, design and delivery levels.

It is a fact that adopting such technology in language learning opens up exciting vistas for effective learning, promoting interactivity, collaboration, portability, creativity and innovation. English language learners find themselves overwhelmed with much online **input** compared to the very limited input available in a face-to-face teaching environment. Effective involvement of students in utilizing interactive tools such as chat, course mail, discussion boards, wikis, etc. are expected to enhance the amount of input and therefore influences their output positively.

My presentation focused on the impact of using technology in language learning with particular reference to the influence of the Blackboard Learning Management System on the development of English language learning at KKU. The presentation tried to answer the following two questions: To what extent does this abundance of input influence the students' abilities to produce **output** in the new language they are learning? Do learners of English feel that their progress in English language learning is enhanced by e-learning systems provided by the university?

To answer these two crucial questions, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) serves as the theoretical basis for this study. TAM proposes that perceived **ease of use** and perceived **usefulness** of technology are predictors of user attitude towards using technology, subsequent behavioral intentions and actual usage. A researcher-designed questionnaire was developed to explore students' perceptions of the impact of technology on the development of various language skills, namely speaking, reading, writing and listening. Some of the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth level students (100 respondents) who have been taking blended courses for the last two years participated in this study to explore their views with regard to the influence of using technology on their progress in learning English. The study concluded with the following results:

Students highly value the importance of blended learning in listening and vocabulary courses.

Writing and reading skills take the second position in benefitting from e-learning tools, according to student perception.

The majority of the participants think that using e-learning does not help students in speaking skills development as with other skills. The degree of student acceptance of the online environment is generally promising. Interactivity and communication among students and interactivity and communication between learners and instructors; and learners' interaction with the content need further efforts by instructors and learners. Statistics shows weakness in these aspects.

Thirty two problems facing students were jotted by the e-learning users in the English Department. These problems are categorized into three types. One set can be tackled by the institution, the second set requires the interference of E-learning Deanship and the solution of the third set lies in the hands of instructors. These problems will, hopefully, be discussed in detail in the next issue of *Mountain Top*.

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"A researcher-designed questionnaire was developed to explore students' perceptions of the impact of technology on the development of various language skills, namely speaking, reading, writing and listening."

ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

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"There are two large-scale ELF corpora currently in progress, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004) and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (Mauranen, 2003)."

English language has established itself as a global lingua franca, a contact language spoken by the people who do not share a native language. Most of its use today is by non-native speakers, who have far outnumbered its native speakers. English constitutes the main means of international communication in a variety of key domains in the world.

According to House, ELF is a "useful tool", a language that can be employed for certain purposes, such as academic, scientific and business talk. She states: English as a lingua franca is nothing more than a useful tool: it is a "language for communication", a medium that is given substance with the different national, regional, local and individual cultural identities its speakers bring to it. English itself does not carry such identities; it is not a "language for identification". (House, 2001: 2)

'English is now the dominant or official language in over 60 countries and is represented in every continent' (Crystal, 1997:106). From this fact, it can be understood that the English language is a vital means of communication for millions of people around the world. During the twentieth century, numerous technological inventions and developments, such as the telephone, fax, electronic mail, internet, etc have facilitated communication between people from all walks of life and the language that is used most is English.

In recent years, the term 'English as a lingua franca' (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. Since roughly only one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language (Crystal 2003), most ELF interactions take place among 'non-native' speakers of English.

Probably between two and three billion people speak English. These may be defined according to Kachru's three circles: inner, outer, expanding (Kachru, 1985). But today the majority of English speakers are located in the outer or expanding circles, using English as a lingua franca (ELF).

The first comprehensive study at the level of phonology was Jenkins' (2000, 2002) work on the Lingua Franca Core which attempts to identify phonological features essential for ELF mutual intelligibility and points out interesting implications for teaching.

There has been more work at the level of pragmatics with studies by Firth (1996), House (1999, 2000), Lesznyak (2002, 2003, 2004), Meierkord (1996, 2002) and Wagner and Firth (1997), examining telephone calls to and from international businesses based in Denmark, classroom discussions in Germany, an international students' meeting in the Netherlands, dinner conversations in the United Kingdom and further telephone calls to and from international businesses based in Denmark respectively.

There are two large-scale ELF corpora currently in progress, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004) and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (Mauranen, 2003).The Asian Corpus of English (ACE, 2009) project is multinational research project investigating the nature of English as a Lingua Franca

Important Websites

SAUDI EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES

	website name	website address
1	King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology	http://www.kacst.edu.sa/
2	General Presidency for Girls Education	http://www.gpgedu.gov....sa/index_english.htm
3	General Org. for Tech. Edu. & Vocational Training	http://www.gotevot.edu.sa
4	Imam University	http://www.imamu.edu.sa/
5	Umm Al-Qura University	http://www.uqu.edu.sa/english/index.htm
6	King Faisal University	http://www.kfu.edu.sa/
7	King Saud University	http://www.ksu.edu.sa/
8	King Khalid University	http://www.kku.edu.sa/
9	Islamic University	http://www.iu.edu.sa/
10	King Fahd University of petroleum & Minerals	http://www.kfupm.edu.sa/
11	King Abdul Aziz University	http://www.kaau.edu.sa/
12	Institute of Public Administration	http://www.ipa.edu.sa/
13	King Fahd National Library	http://www.kfnl.gov.sa/

SAUDI OFFICES ABROAD

	website name	website address
1	Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Washington, DC	http://www.saudiembassy.net/
2	Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, UK	http://www.saudiembassy.org.uk/index2.htm
3	Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, Italy	http://www.arabia-saudita.it/Ambasciata/index.html
4	The Permanent Mission of KSA to the United Nations, NY	http://www.un.int/saudiarabia/
5	The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the U.S.A.	http://www.sacm.org/
6	Islamic Affairs Department, RESA, Washington, DC	http://www.iad.org/
7	Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America	http://iiasa.org/
8	The Saudi Islamic Academy, U.S.A.	http://www.saudiacademy.net/
9	Aramco Services Company, Houston	http://www.aramcoservices.com/

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in Asia.

Other studies have focused on ELF used by speakers of particular linguacultural backgrounds such as Asia/ Southeast Asia (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2002) or Europe (e.g., Jenkins, Modiano, & Seidlhofer, 2001).

Research involving particular domains has involved international business (e.g., Firth, 1996) and academic settings (Mauranen, 2003). While recognition of ELF and empirical interest seem to be gaining momentum there is a clear need for larger databases gathered over time in order to provide the opportunity for more conclusive identification of stable linguistic adaptations (if any) produced by ELF interactions.

Research at the level of lexico-grammar is perhaps most urgently needed as it will serve the need for collecting extensive corpora for comprehensive research at this particular level of language. The linguistic situation and the language distribution present an interesting scenario. Proper communication can only be served if the sound system, vocabulary and grammar of a language are given proper attention, as these are the basic and important features of any language.

To communicate with the speakers of other languages, we either need to know their language or communicate in a Lingua Franca that is comprehensible to both of us. The more readily English is made available, the closer the contact between the developing nations and the West.

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http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/ linguafranca.htm

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