



Mountain Top

Academic Periodical

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Article 1

Thoughts From Dean Abdullah Al-Melhi

Mountain Top was privileged to gain access to our Dean during the course of this semester. As always, Dr. Al-Melhi provided an optimistic ray of hope for students during these bleak times. He highlighted the fact that the department has been using King Khalid University's highly sophisticated online infrastructure and learning management system for a long while now, noting that educators have been well trained to deal with the demands of remote learning, and were always ready to offer their expertise in assisting students. The need to utilize Blackboard as our primary medium of teaching was, therefore, not too much of a hurdle for us to cross.

The Dean also emphasized that he was always confident that students who displayed the appropriate levels of dedication, discipline, and maturity toward their studies would be able to cope easily with the demands of most learning environments. He noted that it is extremely important for students to search for and utilize online learning enhancement facilities. In the absence of face-to-face teaching, this last bit of advice becomes even more important. In order to accelerate the comprehension of their chosen subjects, students must take an increasing amount of responsibility for the way they spend their time.

The Dean reminded us that "the only real possession we have in life is time. We need to manage our time responsibly, so as to maximize our growth in the finite time we have been granted. Allah has made it incumbent on us to use this time in striving for success for both ourselves and others."

When asked about the current plans for the Faculty of Languages and Translation, the Dean said that, despite the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the faculty is still well on track to fulfill its goals. The planned doctorate program in applied linguistics, and the current master's courses offered by the Department of English are unaffected by our adverse circumstances. On the other hand, the planned introduction of a Chinese Language Department within the faculty has been postponed. There are plans in place to proceed with this exciting venture in the near future. The Dean also mentioned that the faculty aims to introduce other major languages in the future.

As always, The Dean reminisced about how he spent countless hours practicing different skills in order to master the English language under very trying conditions back in the "Old Days". He marveled at how easy it has become to access English learning materials. He encourages students to continually make use of modern technologies, social media sites, and other English enhancement opportunities which are available. 'He reminded us that learning is a lifelong endeavor, and we should constantly aim to enhance our skills. In reference to our present dilemma, he warned us to continue to be vigilant and to follow prevailing recommendations issued by Government Ministries.

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Finally, as the semester draws to an end, Dean Al-Melhi urged all students to dedicate as much time as possible to their studies and, thereby, ensure that they will be well prepared for the next level of their studies. He wished success in their final Exams.

An edited version of one of the interviews conducted with the Dean earlier this semester can be viewed at the following YouTube link: <http://youtu.be/HoxIC3gc45o>



Dr. Abdullah Al-Melhi
Dean, Faculty of Languages and Translation

Article 2

Message From the Writing and Media Club Chairperson and Committee Members

Dear Readers:

Although we had great plans to roll out bi-monthly issues of the Students' Edition of the Mountain Top Academic Periodical, to hold an English Writing Competition, an English Audio-Visual Competition, and to interview a host of exciting personalities, the prevailing COVID-19 environment has forced us to delay these events until conditions improve. We are grateful for the participation and efforts of those who have made the publication of this, the STUDENTS' DECEMBER 2020 Edition, possible. Apart from the unbelievably professional writers of the articles featured in this publication, we must also give special mention and thanks to our new stars, up and coming journalists, video cameraman/editor, Osama Yayah Asiri and interviewer/editor Abdullelah Essam Makhssom.

Furthermore, we especially wish to thank our esteemed, Dean Abdullah Al-Melhi for always availing himself to us, his students. His dedication to the welfare of both staff and students is one of the hallmarks of his continual, exemplary leadership in the Department of Languages and Translation. Our gratitude also goes out to Prof. Abdullah Hady Al-Qahtani for having made the time to grant us an interview during his busy schedule. We intend to learn a lot more from, and about, these two iconic Saudi academics when the time is right, Inshallah.

We really appreciate the students who will make an effort to read this magazine and watch the attached videos. Your language acquisition skills can only benefit through your immersion into an English environment wherever and whenever possible.

Although we have been unable to start the competitions mentioned above, we still encourage you to write articles/stories and to shoot English videos. We are sure that, as the vaccines against the virus becomes increasingly available, we will soon be able to implement all our plans, Inshallah. Remember that you can always forward any relevant articles/stories/videos to mountaintop.kku@gmail.com for the possible publication/screening of your work. All stories which have been successfully published / screened will be eligible for the first competitions announced in the future.

Finally, dearest fellow students, best of luck in the Final Exams. Your GPA and future depend on how you navigate these challenging times.

Take Care.

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Manni Majed Manni
Chairman of the English Writing and Media Society.
Third Year Student



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Article 3

The Triangle of Happiness – A Blueprint For Success on Earth

Interview With Prof. Abdullah Hadi Al-Qahtani

Professor Al-Qahtani is a world renowned academic, philanthropist and thought leader. Born and raised in Asir, Professor Al-Qahtani completed his undergraduate degree at King Khalid University. After a brief stint as a teaching assistant, he furthered his studies in the United States of America. Upon his return to Saudi, Professor Al-Qahtani strove to benefit as many of his fellow human beings as humanly possible. Twenty years ago, together with the assistance of some of his colleagues at King Khalid University, he helped to establish a charitable organization, which offers various services to expatriates in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mountain Top's student reporters were fortunate to secure the opportunity of interviewing the constantly busy professor.

The professor highlighted an interesting fact; namely, that there were over 300 different languages spoken in this country. The Dawah Center in Khamis Mushait currently offers Islamic education and services in 13 key mother tongues of those different languages. He indicated that, with modern technology, the Islamic education of the center could be shared worldwide. Similarly, students, especially at university level, had the privilege of accessing all their needs to continue their education through online facilities.

Among the treasure trove of information, knowledge, and advice the professor shared with us, was the point that it is important for individuals to set goals for themselves. Professor Al-Qahtani reminded us that, together with the intent of working only for the sake of Allah Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala, setting goals and having direction in life are the foundations of achieving success. He continually emphasized his vision of "The Triangle of Success."

As previously mentioned, he continually stressed that our relationship with our Creator, Allah Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala, is the key component of this triangle. If we can please Allah, our happiness is guaranteed. In order to please Allah, we need to fulfill our responsibilities both to others and ourselves. "Others" refers to everything outside of ourselves. We have a responsibility to care for our fellow beings, family, community, plants, animals, the environment, and so on. He warned that our success must never come at the expense of us abusing these two relationships. Our sincere attitude of fulfilling our responsibilities toward them, as commanded by Allah Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala, is non-negotiable. Finally, fulfilling our own personal goals completes this triangle of happiness, within the boundaries

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highlighted above. In summary, we need to focus on pleasing Allah Sub'hanahu wa Ta'ala, others (including people and their environment), and our self.

The above is only an extract version of our full interview. To listen to the whole interview, use the following link: <https://youtu.be/shVxmH5KObge>



Prof. Abdullah Hadi Al-Qahtani

Article 4

United, but Six Feet Apart

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a highly polarizing time. A time of love yet hate, of unity yet division, and of loss yet recovery. It's a fascinating, painful paradox. We're feeling isolated in quarantine, while all our friends are a (Face Time) call away. We are alone in our living rooms, while the entire world is on a never-ending Zoom session. We're united by our pain and sickness, yet we're divided in our views and in how we cope. Around the world, each person has adopted a different method for dealing with the pandemic. Many see it as a blessing in disguise. Others see it as a carefully constructed conspiracy theory. So I wonder, what's the truth? What's the right way to deal with our current situation? And what good can we muster out of it?

The Conspiracy Theory

The COVID-19 conspiracy is made up of the classic ingredients that all other conspiracies depend on: ill-researched arguments, second-hand accounts, hear-say and nonsense, and an all-around attitude of "they want to hide the truth from us."

Many people use the conspiracy tactic to rationalize the fact that no one knows what's going on. They simply can't accept the fact that we are facing a new problem and need some time to figure things out. They demand answers now and not a minute later, which is impossible. Conspiracy theories are very attractive, offering easy and short answers for big and unanswerable questions; people tend to believe that instead of an honest "I don't know." Whatever we choose to believe, we need to ask ourselves one simple question: are we buying this argument because we know it's rational, or do we choose to believe it because it's an easy way out?

A Blessing in Disguise

I tend to believe that prosperity can come from adversity. It's a beautiful thought, that people can spin gold out of their misfortunes. Despite all the pain and loss, I think we should still look at the little pieces of hope sprinkled throughout.

A few friends of mine found their time in quarantine to be very productive. They finally had the time to be creative again, to go back to reading books, or to finalize that project they've been putting off for years. Many others were able to reconnect with their families.

Positivity can be found not only on a personal scale, but also on a larger scale. I believe humanity can finally come together for the first time to fight a common enemy. We can put this new-found unity to work, helping to solve other imminent and pressing issues. There's an overall sense of empathy in today's climate, and it's refreshing.

The virus represents a “war on humanity,” and we all feel the need to protect ourselves and our kind. Maybe we should deal with other issues with that same attitude.

Biological Propaganda

Globally, there is an inevitable pattern of behaviour in a crisis. We have seen it time and time again throughout history: lies being marketed, rumours being spread, and the infamous “blame game.”

People can often take advantage of the public when it’s in a vulnerable position, especially when it’s hard for the public to access information. We thus find some of going about spreading things like: “X are responsible, and we should all blame, harass, and harm them,” which is reductive, manipulative, and above all, benefits the accuser only.

In this time, we need to hold back judgment, and be patient. We all must stop being so easily affected by buzzwords and flashy headlines. The pandemic shouldn’t be used as a tool of manipulation. Otherwise, it could divide us.

Unity

Each of us is being affected by the tide of this pandemic differently, and thus, we all have a different view of it. Our views can coexist in the same space with love and respect. It is my belief that we can all find ways to listen and to discuss, and then, find a way to solve these issues.

Let’s learn something from this. Let’s not allow all this pain to go to waste.

Unity should be everyone’s only duty—but make sure to unite while standing six feet apart.



Faizal Asiri – Author - Third Year Student

Article 5

COVID-19 and the Prospect of Long-Term Online Education?

From the 1st to the 8th of **December 2019**, a new strain of the **severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)** began to appear in *Wuhan*, the capital of the Chinese *Hubei* province. It subsequently infected many millions in the months following its discovery, with horrific death tolls recorded around the world.

For our country, dearest **Saudi Arabia**, this virus began to spread uncontrollably, and it looked almost unstoppable roughly around the middle of this past second semester, leading to a long lockdown. It was then announced that, for the rest of the year, education in this country would continue online, with a very strong possibility of the same occurring for the summer term, and even for the next year.

This issue revealed a lot to me, and it finally gave me the answer I had sought for so long. I shall discuss my views in this article.

I would like to ask: **why is there no option to take a particular class online?**

I have always wondered about this question. In fact, the more I thought about it, the more merit I found in online education compared to traditional classroom-based education. Below are six merits I believe online education possesses:

1. An online classroom can have an exceptionally larger number of students than a traditional classroom.
2. Both students and lecturers need not worry about arriving late, finding an empty seat, or any other similar issue. Since students and lecturers are in their houses, everything is quicker! It is true that an adequate internet connection is necessary, and I shall address that obstacle after this list.
3. Shy students have the option to ask questions in the chat without needing to use the microphone. This is a usually overlooked problem that must be addressed. And, luckily, an online class can help alleviate this problem.
4. There is the possibility that study material does not need to be bought, as lecturers can upload the material onto **Blackboard** in the case of our university. This means that students would have no need to worry about the availability of books and other study materials.
5. In the case of examinations, there is no need to print dozens of examination papers for the class. Only one example needs to be posted to **Blackboard** and all students can access it! In addition, an examination on **Blackboard** reduces the chance of students arriving late for the exam, saving the student any stress that may arise.

6. Having the option to record the class is an invaluable saving grace. This offers a permanent chance to those who missed the class for any reason, and preserves the integrity and feel of the class, which is sometimes completely essential for the student to grasp the meaning of a lesson. It also helps preserve a lecturer's precious time that would have been used to re-explain the previous lesson instead of being devoted to the next class.

And that was what I was able to think of after a week and a half of careful study. Think of the possibilities and room for improvement online education could offer after being given a proper chance! But, before I proceed, in the 2nd entry of the previous list, I stated the following:

“It is true that an adequate internet connection is necessary.”

This is a statement which I must clarify. I bear no ill will towards traditional classroom-based education. I do recognize that some students may not have the best internet connection, or have a capable personal computer, or might face any other barrier preventing them from having a pleasant experience. And so, I do understand that traditional education has some benefits.

And, with my reasoning explained, I thus make my plea:

I humbly request the upper management of our university to please consider my proposal to review and study the great potential online education has, and to examine the current landscape of today's higher education to evaluate the prospects laid out above, then to form and make the proper judgement regarding this matter. I truly do believe in this suggestion, and I sincerely place all of my faith in it. I am completely ready to prove its plausibility, practicality, and viability as a competent alternative.

There is also the matter of the unfair system used to mark student absenteeism, which records a student's absence as a percentage instead of a number, making the penalty of an absence in a class that is given thrice a week 2.66 instead of just 1. This would imply that a student somehow missed two-and-a-half classes and then some, instead of just missing only one. On top of that, I still have not mentioned the penalty for classes that are given twice a week!

There is also the matter of different books for the same class in different majors, with this same issue occurring at different campuses. Also of note is the inability of the university to provide the study material needed (even if the students need to buy it).

I understand that these issues may be a lot bigger than anticipated, but, still, I could not conclude without mentioning them, even without more detail.

The above are my personal views, and I am quite aware that many of my fellow students and other concerned parties may vehemently disagree with me. But that is the whole purpose of debate. We can only learn and improve by voicing our opinions.

For me, granted that many improvements and innovations are still needed, online teaching seems destined to become the primary method of learning in the future.



Anas Mohammed Alshehri
Author
Third Year Student

Article 6

Are Video Games a Form of Art?

Imagine walking into a museum to see paintings from legendary artists and, suddenly, you see a big machine with controllers and a screen displaying a video game. The debate of whether video games should be considered a form of art is ongoing. To analyze this issue further, we have to know and understand what the word “art” really means. Do video games have an element that makes their medium unique and different from others? What do the experts and people from other art fields have to say about this debate?

The definition of art according to the dictionary is the “expression or application of human creative skills and imagination, typically in a visual form.” So, from this definition, we can clearly say that video games are art. To make a video game, you have to be creative, with a great imagination mixed with the skills to translate your work into moving visuals. So why is the question still circulated and debated to this day? The reason is that, when people ask if video games are art, they’re really asking if video games will be remembered. Are they lasting? Do they represent something relevant to life or humanity? Do they have moral lessons or moral philosophies? These kinds of questions have made this debate never-ending.

Painting has aesthetic visual images, poetry has words, music has melodies, and video games have the interaction between the player and the game. The direction that the game will take is largely dependent on the skills of individual players, who have the ability to choose. On the other hand, in a movie, the outcome has already been decided, and you cannot change anything about it. Also, controlling a character and experiencing the journey with them adds to the beauty of the interactivity between you and the game in general. This feature has been used with great success in the gaming industry, proving to the world that video games are indeed an astonishing form of art.

Some experts of other mediums have different opinions on this subject matter, and not all of them are in agreement. For instance, the well-known movie critic, Roger Ebert, stated that “video games can never be art,” a statement that received backlash from the gaming community. They also tried to convince him on his official website to play video games like *Shadow of Colossus* and *ICO* to see the true art of the industry. Another widely known Polish author, Andrzej Sapkowski, said in an interview regarding the presentation of stories in video games, “How much substance can there be in the lines of text when the hero walks through the woods and talks to a squirrel? Where is the literature in that? Where is the room for depth or sophisticated language with which games could elevate culture? There is none.”

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Ironically, after he made that statement, he made a deal with a Polish game studio to collaborate with them on a new game.

It should be noted that there are a lot of artists and talented individuals who see the gaming field as a form of art. Academy Award-winning director, Guillermo Del Toro, is one such example. He had this to say about video games: "It is a medium that gains no respect among the intelligentsia..." going on to say that he believes that video games are "a narrative art form." The famous composer Jonny Greenwood has the same perspective, as do many other great gifted people from different mediums who see video games as a form of art.

In conclusion, the answer to this question is complicated for many, but at the same time, it is crystal clear that video games are, without a doubt, a form of art. They match the definition of art, and they have unique qualities that you will not find in any other medium of art. Nonetheless, the debate is still open. You will find people who see them as a form of art, and the others who disagree. Even artists and experts in different art fields have different points of view on this subject.

I unequivocally maintain it is a great form of art.

What about YOU?



Rayan Hassan Al Faify
Author