

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Association of Language Teachers

# KSAALT Quarterly

## A Welcome Letter from the President

### Special points of interest:

- New KSAALT President; New Executive Council
- EFL classroom activities galore
- 21st Century skills and language testing
- Inspirational teaching practitioners
- New representatives in KSAALT Chapters: Riyadh & Abha
- An effective EFL classroom

### Inside this issue:

Short Classroom Activities	2
Language Learning Testing	4
Faculty Spotlight	5
Describing/Noticing in Context	6
TESOL Arabia Conference	6
Abha Chapter Open House	5
Khobar Chapter Open House	9

Dear **KSAALT Members and Friends**,

Welcome to the new scholastic year, 2014-2015.

I am honored to be able to lead KSAALT into its ninth year of existence. KSAALT was created in 2006 with a handful of dedicated educators who had a desire to serve, educate, and connect language teachers in Saudi Arabia. As the new Executive President, I promise to fulfill that mandate by continuing to provide professional development with interactive and engaging general meetings, workshops, a mini-conference and an annual conference.

I am excited about the year we have ahead of us and to have you on board. This year, together with the Executive Council, I plan to work on nationalization, more social

media access, and more communication between and within the Chapters. Speaker variety and the Bylaws will also be worked on. It is important to remember that an organization is only as strong as its membership. Therefore, I encourage you to be active and to make KSAALT a part of your support system. You will have the chance to share ideas and to discover new amazing professional avenues that will benefit you. You will have the opportunity to grow professionally and academically and to network with your colleagues in the field.

In order for KSAALT to thrive, your participation is vital. Therefore, together with all the regional chapters (Khobar, Riyadh, Jeddah, Yanbu, and Abha), I plan with your help and the help of your Executive Council to ensure KSAALT's success.



**Mallkah Sisay**  
KSAALT President

Thank you for your support and welcome to another great year at KSAALT, the only TESOL affiliate and IATEFL associate in the Kingdom.

Warm regards,

*Mallkah Sisay*

## Mini Conference, Al-Khobar

*Mark this date down—13 December 2014 (Saturday)*

Conference Theme: **Creating Global Students in the EFL Classroom**

Details of this yearly mini-conference will be available from the Executive Council soon.

Don't miss this professional development opportunity!

Visit us at [www.ksaalt.org](http://www.ksaalt.org).



## From Chief Editor's Desk



---

*"If you would like to write about someone who's inspired you, please do not hesitate to contact me."*

---

November, November... is a month to remember.

November marks the beginning of the winter here in the Kingdom as the temperature is slowly declining. We can only have eleven hours of daylight between sunrise and sunset here in Khobar. Most of us are early birds going to school, to college and when it's home time, the big glowy burned-orange heavenly object begins to sink behind the rows of palm trees in the horizon.

Although the day is over, KSAALT will be still working for its member ensuring the success of this growing organization - a teaching professionals' community.

I'm so proud to present the first issue of Volume 7 to you all under the leadership of our new President and in collaboration with the Executive Council and new representatives of KSAALT chapters: Khobar, Riyadh, Jeddah, Yanbu and Abha.

In this issue, we have Dr. Scott Zimmermann who is our regular contributor, sharing his insightful teach-

ing tips and useful teaching resources with our EFL teaching practitioners. Joan Kosich, our editor and journalist, continued to arm herself with a pencil and a paper pad and interview colleagues who serve as our models. I'm certain that this will bring inspiration to our readers. If you would like to write about someone who's inspired you, please do not hesitate to contact me ([ksaaltpubmatters@hotmail.com](mailto:ksaaltpubmatters@hotmail.com)).

Also, we have three first-time contributors to this issue. They are Sameera Baloch, Ammar Anas and Andrew P. Livitsanos. Ms. Sameera brought us up-to-date on the 21st century skills we expect our EFL learners to master. The evaluation of their language skills, therefore, is very different from the traditional evaluation methods. Mr. Ammar showed us the importance of Quality Classroom Talk (QCT) in an EFL classroom. The pre-planned, structured teacher-student interactions give a picture of a lively language classroom. More importantly, use of authentic English and spontaneous pro-

duction of real-life English are valued. EFL learners will be greatly benefited from QCT. Mr. Livitsanos wrote about relating EFL learners to their familiar context instead of attempting to use context that is foreign to them. Through 'describing' and 'noticing' activities, both EFL instructors and learners will be engaged in meaning making, which will create meaningful and memorable language teaching/learning experience.

Next, I'd like to thank our President for addressing the members of KSAALT; Dr. Afeefa to send in the report of their Open House event hosted in Abha; and Dr. Philine to report on the Open House/First General Meeting held in Khobar. In addition, I thank those volunteers who have signed up for our publication work. We shall get organized soon.

Finally, I hope you all enjoy reading this new issue and your valuable feedback will be highly appreciated.

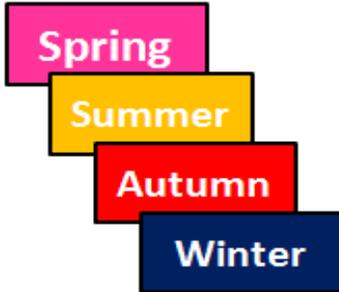
Thank you very much and have a very good year.

*Wai Si El-Hassan*

Chief Editor



## Short Activities in the EFL Classroom



### Vocabulary Steps

---

*“Any classroom activity should typically be both enjoyable for the students and pedagogically sound.”*

---



### Sentence Formation and Grammar Activities

You have prepared a well-balanced lesson for your Monday class. It includes an introduction, speaking activities, reading, writing, grammar, and pronunciation practice. You have thought about and prepared ideas for handling problems that may arise during the lesson. For example, you decided how to answer questions about a grammar point that often baffles students.

A great lesson plan can be made even better by including a couple of short activities. These activities, perhaps lasting as little as five minutes, serve many roles. They can serve as a segue from one type of activity to another. Short activities are also useful as a warm-up, review, or game. Any classroom activity should typically be both enjoyable for the students and pedagogically sound. Short activities usually involve minimal preparation (whiteboard, markers, pens, and paper) and are adaptable for various levels and for large and small classes.

**Spelling:** Missing Vowels is putting a key sentence on the whiteboard without the vowels; students work to fill in the missing letters. Air Words is done in pairs: students spell key words in the air and their partners decipher and say the word.

Word Pools works well as a transition to another activity: pools or clouds with mixed-up letters are put on the board and the students use them to form words and then phrases. My favorite is Spelling Bee: ten target words are dictated to the class as a review activity.

**Vocabulary:** Back to the Board is an extremely popular game. A student sits with his or her back to the whiteboard. The instructor writes the target word on the board and the class or team tries to get the student to say the word. Vocabulary Steps is often used as a review. For instance, after teaching the seasons to a beginner-level class, have them draw four steps on their papers. On the top step, the student writes his or her favorite season and then the second favorite on the step down below. In addition to seasons, this flexible activity is great for foods, sports, music, movies, hobbies, chores, academic subjects, etc.

Odd One Out involves student identification of the word that is different from the others. For example: beef, chicken, salad, turkey. The odd one out is salad because it is not a meat. Sometimes the odd one out is not so clear and students debate their choices, and that's fine as long as the 'debate' is in English.

And finally, Ring-a-Word is certain to wake up somnolent students. Two teams are sent to the board and one-person-taking-turns in each team has a marker, a different color for each team. The teacher says verb 1, for example, the teams race to locate and circle the corresponding verb 2. The game can also be played with the alphabets, numbers, dates, times, and myriad possibilities.

**Sentence Formation and Grammar:** As a warmer, students make sentences (Jumbled Sentences) out of the words the teacher has put on the board. Generally, the sentences should not be too long or too difficult and should be relevant to the week's lessons. In Correcting Mistakes, the class finds errors with sentences. It's important to finish this activity by showing the learners the correct version. Question Exchange is an oral practice activity. Each student is given a key question such as *How often do you...?* and goes around the class posing the question.

**Sources:** EFL activities are available online and elsewhere, but the best book on the subject is [Five-Minute Activities](#) by Penny Ur and Andrew Wright.

**Dr. Scott Zimmermann** is an academic director in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He has previously taught EFL/ESL in South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Mexico, and the United States.





## Faculty Spotlight

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”

Nelson Mandela

*“Christine firmly believes if her students feel safe in an environment where they can fail, they will try harder and eventually they will succeed.”*

This quote is near and dear to Christine L'Ecluse, our second spotlighted KSAALT teacher in this series. These inspired words of Nelson Mandela have become the message that Christine strives to give to her students and colleagues as Academic Coordinator of the Preparatory Program at Dammam University.



Christine L'Ecluse

Christine views her 4-year stay in Saudi Arabia as an adventure, which has taken her on unexpected paths. Her roles in the Kingdom have been varied. First, she found herself teaching at King Saud University in Riyadh where she walked into her classroom one November and found out she was the university's eighth teacher for Fall semester. Next, her present company: Education Experts, moved her to Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University, the biggest women's university in the world, where she spent one year troubleshooting her colleagues' problems and addressing

their concerns. Based on this experience, she was next moved to Dammam University where she spent two years coordinating the Women's Preparatory Program. She enjoys helping teachers and students with curriculum, book ordering, and testing. Clarifying information for teachers and students working their way through the Saudi system is also rewarding to Christine. This includes helping Saudi girls adjust from high school to college educational standards and expectations.

A favorite aspect of being a teacher for her is to see 'light bulbs go off' in students' brains being replaced by understanding, which registers on their faces. Christine also finds ESL a unique and economical way for teachers to learn about the world, and she is always astonished by her students and what she learns from them. Her teaching philosophy is to create a place where her students CAN fail. Christine firmly believes that if her students feel safe in an environment where they can fail, they will try harder and eventually they will succeed. She also believes in tolerance in all situations and advises

cultivating the habit of counting from 1 to 100, which helps us remain composed and patient.

A B.A. in Anthropology and an M.A. in Linguistics, along with a one-year certificate in Technical Writing and Editing from Bellevue Community College in Bellevue, Washington, were the tools with which Christine landed in the Kingdom. Originally from Long Beach, California, she spent the first forty years of her life in the land of sunshine. It was there she met her husband Stan, and moved with him to Seattle, Washington for 17 years. Today finds this couple in Mexico where they are building a home. They have resided in Ajihic, Mexico, for almost 8 years. Her plans after Saudi Arabia are to retire to her newly remodeled Mexican home, sit on the sun-kissed veranda with a refreshing lemonade and create new recipes from the avocados, mangos, and bananas growing in her yard.

Sounds like a great plan, Chris!

**Joan Kosich** received her Masters in ESL from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. She has taught in Yemen, Japan, and Martinique, and spent 11 years teaching at a college in Seattle, Washington before she came to Saudi Arabia. She has taught ESL in the Kingdom for 7 years.

## New Riyadh Chapter Representatives

Riyadh Chapter Representative  
Riyadh Chapter Treasurer  
Member at Large  
Member at Large

### Calendar of Events 2014 – 2015:

October 25th, 2014  
November 29th, 2014  
December 20th, 2015  
February 21st, 2015  
April 18th, 2015

Mr. Georgios Kormpas  
Ms. Bushra AlBayaty  
Ms. Syeda Shahida Mateen  
Ms. Aisha Aslam

1st GM  
2nd GM  
3rd GM  
4th GM/Mini Conference  
5th GM



## The Role of “Describing/Noticing” in Contexts

Does ‘describing’ not involve nearly every aspect of our lives? Has a sentence not gone by when ‘the man in the street’, educators, learners or listeners have reflected on past experiences or fact? For the learner’s attempting to master a language, they are consistently striving to overcome an information gap – reflecting on past personal experiences and then representing them in real-world situations, and giving an account about something or someone.

*How you spent the weekend, or lost your wallet, or had a great time on vacation? Describe difficulties or joyous occasions, or how to cook spaghetti, or a song that brings back memories, or a sepia photograph, or a taste, or a smell, or the events of a TV program, or your ancestry or how you’ve been underpaid – all are situations that you would be asked to describe. How we*

wish to use the language at hand comes into play within the context. No matter what the context is, giving a description (or ‘describing’) plays a crucial part in our lives.

In the educational context, we listen to and read students’ reflections ‘noticing’ vocabulary, ‘noticing’ structures, absorbing past personal experiences and reflections. How are we to facilitate and nurture such reflections as educators? The ‘Context of Situation’ which was coined by Malinowski (1927) still holds true in the current days. In order to understand an utterance, we need to not only know the literal meanings of the words, but also all the complex details of the social context in which the utterance occurs. Similarly, any language in context has no ‘Genus Maximus’ (as it is forever – changing; dynamic) and that a language

cannot ever fully be explained, but ... it can be perceived. KSA has been referred to as having ‘lack of context’ on which to apply critical thinking and ability to compare against. However, within the KSA context, there is ample room for describing and independent thinking. Describing tells someone what something is like. Whether it is the ubiquitous sweet scent/fragrance/smell of the ‘Sheesha’ at the local café or price differences at the supermarket, to the explaining to the teacher why the students themselves are late or absent.

In this myriad of descriptions, we sometimes choose to elaborate by adding colorful adjectives in our delivery of meaning, e.g. “As I sat under the turquoise blue sky overlooking the azure sea, a majestic bird stopped for a quick dip”. This piece of writing is to keep us aware of the importance of



**A Saudi EFL Classroom**

*“... within the KSA context, there is ample room for describing and independent thinking. Describing purports to telling someone what something is like.”*

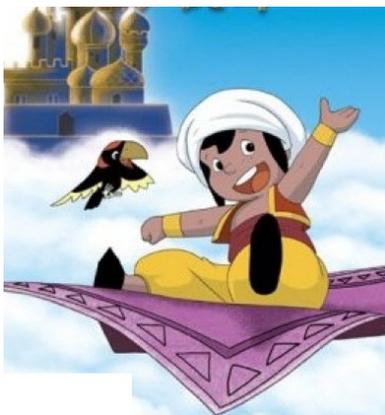
**The 21st Annual International TESOL Arabia Conference**

March 12th - 14th, 2015

Hyatt Regency Hotel

Dubai





Meaning Making in Context

“... making entry to a new context requires us to learn vagaries, nuances and the local ways of making meaning in that context.”

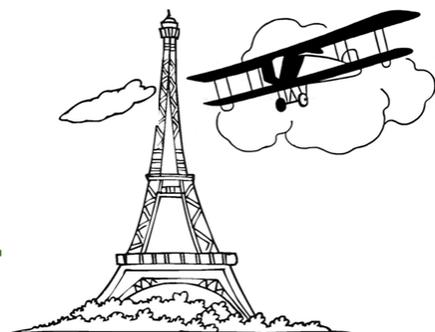
## The Role of “Describing/Noticing” in Contexts (... continued)

describing and noticing in our particular context. Thus, making entry to a new context requires us to learn vagaries, nuances and the local ways of making meaning in that context. Some of the language that is emerging on media channels on TV would have you wonder whether we either need a dictionary or to be a sports fanatic when we are listening to the world news. For

instance, I recently listened to the TV news report using language, such as “*the government is on the back foot*”. To a sports (cricket) fan, he/she would understand this language usage in context. However, to the unaware, they would not understand that the message intended was merely “*the government is on the defensive*”.

As educators, we are saddled with the task of enlightening the tutored in context making use of describing/noticing that involves applications of adjectives and adverbs. Moreover, are we not constantly describing using the language that we choose (or that we are prescribed) – all in the goal of making meaning?

**Andrew Peter Livitsanos** comes from Australia. He is currently teaching Saudi students English at Aramco, Khobar.



## Report from the Abha Chapter

### Open House Event

in collaboration with Departments of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation and College of Arts and Education, KKU, Abha.

This year’s Open House Event of the Abha Chapter of KSAALT was a bonanza of twin workshops for university teachers of English on 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2014. The First workshop, titled: *ESL / EFL Assessment* was conducted by Prof. James D. Brown, Professor of Language Studies and the Director of the National Foreign Language Resource Centre, University of Hawaii at Manoa, USA, and the second workshop, titled: *English in a Globalized world*, was given by Dr. Alan

Firth, Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics, Newcastle University, United Kingdom.

The Abha Chapter brought the two EFL/ESL experts and the teachers of English from universities, colleges and schools and supervisors from the directorate of Education to a virtual discussion platform. It was a back-to-back workshop conducted as an audio conference facilitated by the visuals from the joint presentation.

### Feedback from the participants:

Feedback from the participants was extremely positive. The participants had an opportunity to discuss with Prof. Brown on assessment of Writ-

ing skill, including writing valid and reliable examination questions to assess students’ learning instead of memorization skills. Also, the participants asked Dr. Firth questions about teaching authentic language to the EFL learners. Dr. Firth explained in detail the advantages of teaching authentic language. The participants were fully engaged with the speakers. Their dialogues clarified many queries from the participants and this was a rewarding experience to those who attended the workshop, especially those who were in supervisory roles and those who were school teachers. They felt that this type of seminars and workshops will improve the teaching of English in



## Report from Abha Chapter

schools. This, in turn, will strengthen the university education in the long run.

### Feedback from the speakers:

The speakers told the Abha Chapter that this was the first time they gave a workshop without the audience in sight. It felt odd at the beginning, but they found that the experience was unique to them, which would be remembered for a long time.

### Acknowledgments

The KSAALT Abha Chapter sincerely wishes to acknowledge the support from Dr. Abdullah Melhi, Dean Faculty of Languages & Translation, King Khalid University, for the sponsorship of our speakers, and would like to thank Dr. Khairyah Hussein Assiri, the Dean College of Arts & Education, for showing generous hospitality to our guests.

Report prepared by  
Dr. Afeefa Banu  
**KSAALT Abha Chapter  
Representative**



## Improving Quality Classroom Talk in an EFL Classroom

In an EFL language teaching setting, such as Saudi Arabia, where students get little opportunity to use and practice English, it is very important to create an environment where students can practice a genuine style of classroom communication. Textbooks, technology, the teacher and the students constitute a communicative environment in the classroom. However, interaction between the teacher and the students is the most important factor that shapes the environment for real-life learning. The interaction between teachers and students occurs in the form of 'talk' that works as a tool and is used in language learning activities. It also offers students an opportunity to use English and to enable them to use English to widen their English learning experience outside the classroom.

It is essential to stress the importance of Teacher Talk (TT) and Student Talk (ST) and their role in providing comprehensible inputs to learners so that they can build their learning. TT and ST represents what a teacher talks to his students about in the form of instructions to conduct learning activities in the classroom and what students verbally produce in response to TT. TT and ST constitute Classroom Talk and contribute significantly to students' foreign language learning.

TT and ST create an environment for language learning in an EFL classroom and help learners to communicate in real-life situations. Therefore, the language teaching scholars recommend teachers to make use of Quality Teacher Talk (QTT). QTT means that teachers should NOT overuse TT

while delivering instructions for classroom activities nor undermine the use of ST. Otherwise, students will not obtain the right level of language input or produce sufficient language output.

The effectiveness of student learning is closely associated with the quality of classroom talk and a teacher should encourage his students to generate their own questions and arguments. It is necessary for English language teachers to raise the quality of his talk and to create an interactive and communicative environment in the classroom. This will enable his learners to participate in all learning activities of the classroom.

Occasional observations show that a classroom becomes communicative when students ask questions, give answers and participate in

---

*"It is very important to create an environment where students can practice a genuine classroom communication."*

---

## Improving Quality Classroom Talk in an EFL Classroom (Continued)

'talk' with their teachers. However, such classrooms are not genuinely communicative. Communicative means that students are able to produce genuine language output on the basis of their language learning and acquisition. Producing fixed and rehearsed chunks of questions and answers is not truly communicative.

Traditionally, classroom teachers assume the role of the primary generator of comprehensible input in the target language while students are at the receiving end. In fact, students' language learning will not be maximized until they make contribution to the classroom talk.

Teachers should encourage spontaneous and natural forms of communication with their students. Beside correcting students' grammar errors, a teacher should give thorough feedback to his students on the process of generating meaning. During classroom activities, a teacher should allow his students to create their own responses although they may be short and faulty.

As teaching practitioners of the modern world, we need to reflect on our teaching practice and produce classroom talks of high quality. In order to achieve the effectiveness of a classroom talk, we need to recognize the different forms of Student Talk and address various classroom teaching and learning issues, such as lack of participation in classroom talk and students' motivation in taking part in their own learning process.



**Ammar Anas** is a lecturer at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. He has supervised e-Learning Unit at Al-Namas Campus and has been the head of the Department of English at the College of Arts & Sciences Al-Namas. He is an MA in ELT and holds CELTA.

## Khobar Chapter Open House/1st GM

The Executive Council and the Khobar Chapter Team would like to express its heartfelt appreciation for your support of the Khobar Open House held on 17 October 2014—thank you for spending your Friday with us. It was a record-breaking chapter general event at 144 participants! We are so pleased to welcome you to a new year of educational and professional development with your colleagues.

A special thank you to our very popular presenter, Mr. Osama Elbeyaly—Senior Teacher, British Council, Jeddah—for his outstanding, well-received workshop that kept everyone engaged and to Rowad Al Khaleej International School-Dammam for hosting us at their beautiful facility.

As President Malikah said in her welcome, KSAALT is only as strong as its members. Thank you so much for your genuine support and active participation. Please continue to participate in Khobar/Dammam and around the Kingdom at our chapters in Riyadh, Jeddah, Yanbu, and Abha.

**KSAALT Executive Council and Khobar Chapter Team**

*“Teachers should encourage spontaneous and natural forms of communication with their students.”*



## KSAALT QUARTERLY

## Editorial Board

Wai-Si El-Hassan

Dr. Philline Deraney

Deborah Abbott

Edith Reyntiens

Joan Kosich

Kim Lane

Jasia Rafiq

email: KSAALTpubMatters@hotmail.com



**The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Association of Language Teachers** is a group of language educators interested in promoting and supporting language instruction across Saudi Arabia. Although most members of KSAALT teach English as a second or foreign language, KSAALT welcomes educators that teach in all languages or teach content with English as a medium of instruction. The main mission of this growing organization is to connect those interested in supporting and advancing language instruction. Its success depends on the ethos, logos, and pathos of its members. KSAALT supports educators from all institutions and levels (e.g., K-12, tertiary education, language institutions) and welcomes instructors from all nations.

**We're on the Web!**  
[www.ksaalt.org](http://www.ksaalt.org)

## Abha Chapter New Representatives

Dr. Afeefa Banu

Chapter Representative ([abano@kku.edu.sa](mailto:abano@kku.edu.sa))

Ms. Amal Metwally

Chapter Secretary ([amal\\_metwally@yahoo.com](mailto:amal_metwally@yahoo.com))

Dr. Areej Hussein

Chapter Treasurer ([badr\\_a\\_q@hotmail.com](mailto:badr_a_q@hotmail.com))

Dr. Mazeegha Al Tale'

Member-at-Large ([maltale@kku.edu.sa](mailto:maltale@kku.edu.sa))