

# KSAALT Quarterly

## From the Chief Editor's Desk

### Special points of interest:

- Second Language Acquisition & Learners' Cultural Identity
- Farewell to our friends
- A spotlight on Ms. Haifa
- A Flipped Classroom
- Autonomous Learners
- News from Publications Committee & Abha Chapter

### Inside this issue:

In Memory of our late friend, Mr. Keith Carter	2
Second Language Acquisition & Learners' Cultural Identity	5
Faculty Spotlight	6
An Interview with Dr. Junifer Abatayo	7
A Flipped Classroom	9
Teaching Learners to be Autonomous at the University Level	11
SPELT Conference 2015	14
News from the Publications Committee	15
News from Abha Chapter	15

Following the 8th annual conference where teaching professionals met and exchanged new ideas and insightful thoughts, we are proud to present the last issue of our KSAALT Quarterly for the academic year 2014–2015.

At the conference, it was my pleasure to meet all the contributors to this issue (Issue 3, Vol. 7). Mr. **Ahmed Al-Adawy** is our first-time contributor who wrote about the relationship between the cultural identity of a learner and his/her learning of a second language. Ms. **Shanjida Halim** and Ms. **Tanzina Halim** were both presenters at the conference and, in this issue, they wrote about how to enable learners to be autonomous at the HE level. Ms. **Meraj T. Syed**, another conference presenter, shared with us

an innovative teaching methodology: 'A Flipped Classroom: a learner-centered approach.'

Ms. **Joan Kosich**, our regular contributor, shone her spotlight on Ms. Haifa Al-Taifi. I'm certain that our readers will find this narrative inspiring.

On a very different note, a very, very sad note, we are expressing our heartfelt condolences for the loss of our dear colleague, Mr. Keith Carter, who was always there for us in every KSAALT's event. The memory of Keith will forever remain in our hearts.

We are also saying farewell to Dr. Junifer who is a pioneer in establishing the Yanbu chapter. For those who do not know Dr. Junifer so well, you will find out more about him in an interview

which is included in this issue.

Finally, I would like to ask our readers to write in some questions that they would like their fellow readers/colleagues to answer. The purpose is to support each other's teaching of ESL/EFL in the Saudi classroom.

To kick-start this Q&A session, the question I put forward to you is: '**What do you do to encourage learning outside the classroom?**'

I am looking forward to hearing from you. Please let us know your name and some other essential details for publication purposes.

Have a very lovely summer!

*Wai Si El-Hassan*

Chief Editor  
ksaaltpubmatters  
@hotmail.com

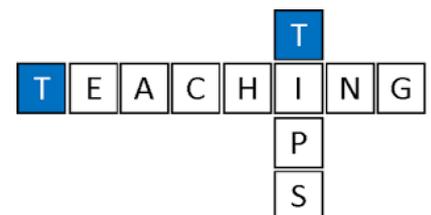


## Essential Tips for Teachers of Modern Languages

For some tips on how a teacher brings modern languages, such as English, to life in the classroom, visit <http://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/essential-tips-teachers-modern-languages>.

The above is a link to an article written by Davinia Hardwick published online in British Council's Voices Magazine on 19 March 2015.

- Use the target language in lessons
- Encourage students to adopt a hands-on approach to language learning
- Never forget, grammar is the foundation for building language skills
- Language is cumulative and must be consolidated outside the classroom
- Bring language and culture alive in the classroom



**Davinia Hardwick**, formerly a British Council English language assistant, is now Head of French at a UK school.

8 April 2015

Dear KSAALT Members and Friends,

It is with deep sadness that I share with you that one of our longest standing members, Mr. Keith Carter, passed away this week. Mr. Keith Carter had been a member since 2007. He had served as a Member-at-Large and on the Hospitality Committee. He always attended meetings with a smile on his face and a positive attitude to share. He helped out and was very supportive of KSAALT's activities. He will be deeply missed by our KSAALT family.

My condolences are extended to his family and friends. May God give them the strength and peace to get through this difficult period. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Regards,

Malikah Sisay  
President

## *In Memory of Our Friend*

*To Saudi Arabia spring came; April came; a bleak swooping sandstorm came and carried Keith away. No one got to fare our dear friend well, so sudden; so deep filled with sorrow!*

*Everyone who knew Keith would describe him as a gentle giant. He was genteel, kind, and always there to help and support us with the work that we needed to do.*

*At KSAALT, he was a dedicated member-at-large devoting himself to the success of every general meeting that was held regardless of where the location was.*

*At PMU, his work university, Keith was a caring and conscientious English instructor. Almost 20 faculty from both male and female campuses worked together and served on the Student Magazine Committee. Keith zealously encouraged his students to write and to make contribution to the magazine. His dedication and efforts were astounding and outstanding.*



**Keith Carter**



*Keith, our dear friend,  
will be sorely missed!*

*Wai Si El-Hassan*

Chief Editor

KSAALT Publications

Chair

PMU Prep Student Magazine Committee



Executive Council, 2012-2013

I felt sad to hear the news of Mr. Keith passing away. I will remember him in my prayers.

**Dr. Izdehar**

He was an important member of KSAALT and our dear friend.

**Muhammad Siraj Khan**

My deepest condolences ...

May God grant patience to the family ...

**Fatmah Azam Ali**

Master English Education & Training

My heart-felt condolences! May the Almighty accommodate him in His heavenly abode!

**K. Peer Mohamed**

Sad news. I extend my condolences to all KASALT members.

**Sayada Azmath J A Ansari**

Very sorry to hear that! Prayers and fond memories are what we have to remember our dearly departed. My most heartfelt condolences.

**Norah Alshehri**

Hi Malukah,

Thank you for the write up about Keith Carter. He was a long time good friend. I broke the news of his passing to his sister in Detroit this evening; not an easy task but Keith deserved the best. I'll send a copy of this along to his sister and family.

Thank you,

**Doug Evans**

---

*“... Keith  
deserved the  
best ...”*

---

May he rest in peace. My condolences go to our KSAALT family and to his own family.

**Ghadah Albarqi**

Our condolences to the family. May God give them strength and peace. Amen.

**Manjeet Gupta**

It is sad to hear this news. I extend my condolences to his family.

**Kalul San**

It is sad to hear this news. My condolences.

**D. Fatima Abelrahman**

Salmanbin Abdulaziz University

Very sad - he was a great guy.

**Thomas Wood**

It's sad to hear this news. God forgives him, and gives his family strengths and peace.

**Mona Aljohani**

Keith was a special man. Although I only met him about 5 times on the Tamimi shopping bus, we always had a fun and pleasant conversation. He will be very missed by those close to him no doubt, as I feel a big loss of his friendly smile and gracious ways even though I am but an acquaintance.

**Joan Kosich**



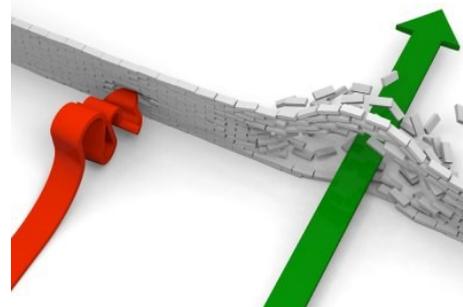
## Second Language Acquisition and Learners' Cultural Identity

As second language teachers, we have always faced hardships in getting our students to adopt the new second language in a reasonable pace, especially with adult learners. Have you ever asked yourself why this is happening? The answer to this question was revealed by quite a good number of studies which basically center around the issue of language learners' cultural identity. Learners' cultural identity is usually a big barrier that hinders learners' progress in acquiring the second language. Therefore, the more the learner's own culture and the new culture resemble, the faster the learners grasp the new language. In his research: "Second Language Acquisition: A social Psychological Perspective", Gardner (1985) stated that studying a second European language to European learners is not as much a challenge for them because the cultural identity of the learners is not far apart from what the new language is exposing them to. In contrast to this, most students in the Middle East for example, who are our main concern here, struggle a lot in learning a European language due to the enormous difference between the two cultures (i.e. European vs. Middle Eastern). This huge difference automatically triggers the cultural identity defenses in the subconscious of the learners and in turn it makes it harder to grasp the new language. This phenomenon has been proven in another study: "Language and Identity: Attitudes towards Code-Switching in the Immigrant Language Classroom" conducted by Linda Blomquist (2009). Blomquist pointed out that the speed of language acquisition of immigrants in their new homelands was much faster than the acquisition of the new language while they were in their original countries. The reason of this occurrence was that the new language is taught to individuals (i.e. immigrants) who are already willing to surrender some, if not all, of their cultural identity to achieve faster assimilation into the new society, which in turn breaks down the identity defenses in their subconscious, so the language flows into their minds without resistance.

You may ask: what is the bottom line of this? Well, the bottom line is that we, second language teachers, should be aware of this cultural element when delivering the new language. It is not enough to fill the minds of learners with new vocabularies, grammar rules, writing patterns, etc. What is important is to add an element of the cultural background of the new language to what we do in the classrooms without threatening the original cultural identity of the learners. We should walk this extra mile to find commonalities of the two cultures and avoid clashes between these two cultures. It is easy to do so by introducing some background knowledge of the new language and mixing learning with fun through the usage of media sources which is more digestible to learners than static, 'fun-less' course books. This approach aims at making students feel secured about their cultural identity. If we manage to neutralize the cultural identity defenses in the students' subconscious, we would help them to absorb the language much faster and easier. Gradually, the learners will open their minds and embrace the second language. It is also very important to avoid tackling any kind of comparison between the two cultures or referring one of them as superior than the other or else these cultural defenses will definitely hinder or even stop the learning process.

### References

- Blomquist, L. (2009). Language and Identity: Attitudes towards Code-Switching in the Immigrant Language Classroom. Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED262624>. Umeå University. 2009.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lalonde, R. N. (1985). Second Language Acquisition: A Social Psychological Perspective. Retrieved from <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:223741/FULLTEXT01>. ERIC. 1985.



**Ahmed Al-Adawy** is Curriculum and Assessment Developer of Pearson Incorporation, Middle East.



## Faculty Spotlight

Our last highlighted KSAALT teacher of this academic year is none other than Haifa M. Al-Taifi, our Saudi dynamo. Haifa is proud of being Saudi, a teacher and the mother of four children: Sulaf 27, Summer 25, Ghassan 21 and last but not least, Hanan 15. Haifa is a passionate person in all aspects of her life which one cannot fail to notice even when meeting her for the first time.

Haifa is a person who likes challenges which she faces head on. She is not averse to taking risks in life as she understands this is how people grow. Coming to Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University for the first time, she was given the difficult task of teaching pre-beginner students even though she didn't have much experience at this level. She was successful in this endeavor and next was asked to teach an ESL class of hearing impaired girls at PMU. Again, despite having no experience in this area, she gladly accepted the challenge, learning as she went along. To obtain a point of reference, she visited the Deaf Center in Dammam to see how they taught the girls and then adapted what she learned to her own classes. She found teaching this class to be very rewarding.

Haifa believes that as a teacher, if your students are not learning then the teacher must change the way of teaching to facilitate learning. She also teaches the girls ethics that will prove useful in the years to come like the importance of being on time, showing respect and doing your own work. She thinks if teachers model these kinds of behavior, most students will model them as well.

Having been born in Al-Khobar, attended public schools here and graduated with a degree from Dammam University in English Literature, she is very savvy about how young, female Saudi students think, act and learn. If any non-Saudi teachers in the Preparatory Department are confused about the process of teaching Saudi girls, Haifa is always available to give a helping hand to resolve the issues. Her expert opinions and knowledge of Saudi culture make her an invaluable asset at PMU. Her most important advice to instructors teaching Saudis for the first time is "to connect with and respect your students' Saudiness or wherever they are coming from. Without this connection, they will turn off and not learn. Teachers can usually connect with Saudis by being kind and respectful, yet firm in manner. It is a fine balance, but once mastered it works and learning can take place more successfully".

Haifa enjoys KSAALT and likes to recruit people by word of mouth to become KSAALT members. KSAALT for her is an excellent way for educators to exchange experiences, information, and ideas. She also appreciates the excellent workshops and networking possibilities that it provides.

If any of you readers have any questions about how to negotiate Saudi culture or students, do not hesitate to ask or contact Haifa. She is a generous, positive spirited lady who is a great asset to KSAALT and Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University. We are all lucky to have her as our colleague.



**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.

## An Interview with Dr. Junifer by Correspondence



Dr. Junifer Abatayo

*On hearing the news that Dr. Junifer was leaving the Kingdom for good, I grabbed him for an interview using technology called electronic mail. I had 10 questions to ask our KSAALT forever faithful friend who is our rock.*

### 1. What's your full name, Dr. Junifer, and when did you come to the Kingdom?

My full name is Dr. Junifer Aliviado Abatayo. I started teaching at the Royal Commission of Yanbu, English Language Center Yanbu (ELCY) in 2009. I'm Chairman, Language Testing and Assessment (2010 to present) and KSAALT Yanbu Secretary from 2010 up to present.

### 2. When did you first join KSAALT and whereabouts were you in the Kingdom?

I First joined KSAALT in 2010 as presenter.

### 3. How did Yanbu chapter come into being? Can you share with us some highlights of its creation?

Yes, I feel the need to seek opportunities to enhance professional career growth of teachers in Yanbu, particularly the ELCY. There was no language association for teachers in our locality and I believe KSAALT can help teachers keep abreast of the teaching profession.

I first met Ms. Wai-Si in PMU (KSAALT 2010). She asked me to join the meeting to learn more about KSAALT. Then, I expressed my interest and desire to create a chapter in Yanbu and the rest is history.

So, Yanbu Chapter was created in 2010 with initial 24 members (all males) and in 2011, 24 female teachers from secondary and tertiary levels registered.

### 4. What are the highlights of the events of Yanbu chapter? Why is it important to hold professional development in Yanbu?

Highlights of the events in Yanbu: In 5 years, we were able to hold 12 general meetings, workshops, paper presentations, forums, group discussion and the very first semi-annual conference in 2014 attended by Mr. Thomas Wood (Former President of KSAALT).

### 5. Were there any problems to promote KSAALT events and activities all these years and how did you find the solutions?

The merging of men and women was a challenge. The chapter decided to appoint a female member at large so she can lead and also conduct their own seminars and workshops exclusively for women teachers in the Yanbu community.



## An Interview with Dr. Junifer (Part 2)

### 6. What advice would you give to your successors in Yanbu chapter to ensure its success in the many years to come?

Always believe in the power of cooperation and collaboration. As teachers, we exist because we have a purpose - to transform the lives of our students and prepare them to be better persons in the future. Let our tribe increase!

### 7. What is the most unforgettable memory you have about KSAALT?

Most unforgettable experience with KSAALT: When the organization trusted me to spearhead in leading teachers in Yanbu creating the KSAALT Chapter. I took a lot of courage, effort & patience guiding and influencing teachers in believing that they too can make a difference!

### 8. What advice would you give to the future Executive Council in order to ensure a steady growth of KSAALT as a national and international organization?

Well, I have two pieces of advice to give: 1) Monitor the progress of all chapters and always provide support and assistance, and 2) ECouncil officers/representatives must visit all the chapters so that members will get the chance to know them.

### 9. What are your future plans after leaving the Kingdom?

Explore new opportunities; professional development and share good classroom experiences outside of the Kingdom.

### 10. How would you keep in touch with KSAALT?

I may be physically absent, but in spirit I will always serve KSAALT. Wherever I go, KSAALT will always be a part of me :)

Let me share these lines from the poem by Douglas Malloch:

*It isn't in size that you win or you fail -  
Be the BEST of whatever you are!*

Finally, thank you very much, Dr. Junifer, for agreeing to be a KSAALT academic journal reviewer and thank you for answering these questions I put forward here.

Please keep in touch!

*Wai Si El-Hassan*



## A Flipped Classroom: A Learner Centered Approach

Teaching as a process can be learner-satiating and invigorating only when it continuously adapts to the ever evolving generation of students. The contemporary learners are well acquainted with the use of technology than their predecessors, i.e. the teachers. Technology has added an edge to this sentient learner lot to whom the devices with the World Wide Web are part and parcel of life. In accordance to it, the teaching process has to be evolved to match the needs of these promising learners. Here the learner demand has to be met with a suitable technique. Unlike the traditional classroom techniques used by our predecessors, the supply of instruction methodology has to be of supervision, guidance and mentorship. It has to be of applying engaging and connecting. It should be of, collaboration, application and consensus learning. The model encompassing this entire criterion is the *Flipped Classroom*, an approach which keeps the learner at the center of the teaching-learning process.

The model is a reversal of the traditional lecturing method wherein the post-class tasks are brought to the class and lecturing moves ahead of the class. The steps are as follows:

**Step 1:** Delivery of pre-class material on concepts, ideas, or knowledge in general of the topic to be taught/studied through online academic platforms.

**Step 2:** Follow up with the in-class activities, which employs the application of the concepts learned before the class.

**Step 3:** End of the process with post-class collaborative or individual projects, tasks or assignments which require greater intellectual effort, genuine work and practical application of the concept understood/practiced.

These three steps should create a circle of knowledge that requires the learners to apply their critical thinking skills, gain individual intellectual perceptions and develop genuine writing skills.

The instructor in this model delivers the material beforehand through online academic platform. These pre-class materials may include lecture material/notes, chapters of the textbook, videos, podcasts, and audios on the topics to be covered which should be accompanied with writing tasks, such as writing summaries or critical comments, taking online tests, etc., and making notes of doubts, if any, to be clarified in class. This material lays a base for learners who come to class with a prepared mindset and the instructor receives informed students.

The next step for the instructor to follow up is to set up a discussion caters for an in-class environment eliciting the content learned at home and clarifying any queries from the students. Following which, the learners have to be engaged in activities to apply the concepts and theories learned/practiced. Here, the teacher dons the role of a facilitator by providing feedback through comments, suggestions and corrections and, thus, shuns the lecturing method. The in-class activities make a smooth connection to the concepts learned at home and,

hence, the teacher saves the time of explanation in class. The activities have to be engaging encouraging peer interaction and participation. They should not be on reproducing the content learned at home but on concentrating on 'application'. They should make a 'mark' of what has been learned and should hold the learners' attention. The designed activities, apart from facilitating a follow-up of the pre-class instruction material, would also facilitate the learner to have a thorough understanding of the information under discussion. This would eventually help the teacher to mould the class into a participative one and would help him/her to pay individual attention to individual learners in class. Thus, the in-class activities should leave an indelible mark on the mnemonic area of the learners which should facilitate the learners in completing the post-class tasks with ease.

The post-class tasks are a denouement of the *Flipped Model*, which marks the completion of the whole loop of this approach and provide hands on experience to the learners. As an extension of the learning of the previous two steps, the tasks can include collaborative written activities, peer facilitating tasks, individual or group research projects. These tasks, if complied, keep in view the peer participation and writing projects, would facilitate the development of the learners' social communication, writing and research skills. Finally, the use of this model will produce erudite learners.

In order to make the most of the *Flipped Model*, the teacher, as a conscientious knowledge giver, has to chart out a complete program of pre-class, in-class and post-class activities. Each activity should have a smooth transition to the other and has to lead to the other without repetition. The pre-class materials can be prepared two weeks in advance to the posting of material online, this would leave ample time to design the in-class activities. The in-class activities should make a connection to what has been acquired outside of the class. Students' work will be synchronously followed with teacher feedback. To mark the completion, the post-class activities should engage the learners for the next 4 to 5 days in assimilating the acquired knowledge and producing practical projects.

The *Flipped Model* can be used for selected topics of a course or for the entire course of a semester. It is often recommended to make a pilot test of the flipped model for a course and see the outcome before applying it to a course in its entirety. On the other hand, the instructors specialized in using the model recommend identifying the areas or concepts of a course where the completion requires more class time, and applying the flipped model illustrated here, to cover a broad topic within a short span of time.

Critics of this model can raise a question of "why flip?" which justifiably needs clarification. Though the *Flipped Model* requires extra efforts on the part of the teacher, who has to be on the 'go' and to be decisive in framing the activities, the benefits are as follows:

- The teacher plays the contemporary role of a mentor or facilitator in developing the learners' critical thinking abilities.

## A Flipped Classroom (*Continued*)

- Teacher Talk Time (TTT) will be reduced.
- A large portion of syllabus or texts of different genres in the case of a literary course can be covered.
- The attention span of the learners will be expanded as they are active participants in the learning process.
- Interaction among the learners increases and they learn from one another.

The next question is how we can make the *Model* work in the Saudi classroom and the answer is that there are some essential aspects that a teacher needs to pay attention to:

- Online academic platforms, for instance, *Blackboard*, *Digital Learning Platform of Oxford*, etc., can be exploited to their maximum in delivering the pre-class material, completing and submitting the assigned pre-class and post-class tasks, and providing feedback.
- The in-class activities have to create a vibrant collaborative atmosphere so that the learners' feel enthusiastic to prepare before class and attend the lecture with the anticipation of learning more.



- The motivation plays a great role: the learner has to be motivated with promising feedback, suggestions or comments.
- The teacher has to make a point to check the students' work and supply timely feedback.
- The work completed by the learners has to be graded and should be one of the assessment items of a course.
- The *Model* can be incorporated in the syllabi necessitating the instructors to apply it.

By surveying the current academic landscape, it shows that a good number of universities have incorporated the learner centered syllabi and encouraged teachers to take on the role of a mentor/guide. The studies have found that this learner centered approach is facilitating effectively in meeting the learning outcomes of a course. Hence, the *Flipped Model* has been evolving into a decisive pedagogical tool as it carries the potential of generating a cognizant learning community and principled teaching fraternity.

### References

Centre for Teaching + Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://ctl.utexas.edu/teaching/flipping-a-class>.

Ms. **Meraj Tabassum Syed** is an M.Phil. in English Literature, PGCTE (Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching of English) and M.A. English (Gold Medalist). She has 9 years of teaching experience and has been an assistant professor and lecturer. She has expertise in syllabus design, curriculum development, and in teaching of EFL/ESP and Literature. She is presently with the University of Dammam.



## Teaching Learners to be Autonomous at the University Level

The term '*learner autonomy*' was first coined by Henri Holec, the father of learner autonomy, in 1981. Many definitions have since been given to the term depending on the writers, the contexts, and the levels of debates educators have come to.

Autonomous learning has been emphasized by educators and theorists since the early 1970s. In *A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Enhancing Academic Practice*, Fry et al. (2003) state that autonomy (of student learning) commonly refers to students taking more responsibility for and control of themselves and their learning, including being less spoon-fed.

Keith Crome, Ruth Farrar, and Patrick O'Connor (2009) defined *autonomous learning* as: 'A habit of mind, expressed through a range of activities and skills, acquired and developed through practice ... . From this perspective, autonomous learning becomes the habitual exercise of skills, developed and perfected through continuous practice, which comes to be second nature' (p.121). Once students own this kind of thinking, they will have the ability to learn by themselves; this ability will become second nature, not to mention a good habit.

However, Nunan (1997) argues that most learners do not know initially what is best for them, and thus informed decisions about their own learning cannot be expected from them from the very beginning (p.194).

Traditional learning is based on the teacher's instruction and students rely on this taught material. Hence, it is hard for students to play an active role in the learning process. Research suggests that students in many parts of the world have little desire to discover learning on their own. They are passive and rely on rote-learning (Kember, 2004, p.39). They wish to be spoon-fed and in turn they are spoon-fed. Educational research has long recognized that learning is less effective when learners rely on their teachers - the more learners depend on the teacher, the less they take responsibility for their own learning. On the other hand, autonomous learning makes learning more productive and develops learner independence.

### Characteristics associated with Autonomous Learning

The following salient characteristics are associated with autonomous learning that should be demonstrated by the learners:

(1) initiative; (2) self-evaluation; (3) organization; (4) goal-setting; (5) planning; (6) information-seeking; (7) record-keeping; (8) self-monitoring; (9) resourcefulness; and (10) persistence

It should be mentioned that a certain degree of learner training is necessary before students can really become responsible learners.

### Ways of Creating Learner Autonomy

The promotion of learner autonomy requires some effort and careful thinking from the teacher. In order to create learner autonomy, teaching and learning should not always be controlled by the teacher, but a teacher should guide and help students to learn by themselves. The following ways of promoting learner autonomy can be listed from some studies that have been carried out:

- (i) Listen carefully and acknowledge students' perspectives
- (ii) Create opportunities for students to work in their own way
- (iii) Provide opportunities for students to talk
- (iv) Give praise to student improvement and mastery
- (v) Encourage students' efforts and persistence
- (vi) Respond to students' questions and comments
- (vii) Arrange learning materials and seating plans so students can manipulate objects and make conversations rather than passively watch and listen

All of the above help students to act in autonomous way in terms of their own learning.

Powell (1988) points out that:

The role of the teacher is crucial in creating, from the very beginning, an atmosphere of trust and confidence within which the learners are able to feel free to exercise their independent judgement and pursue their interests within a fairly loose framework of content and procedures (p.118).

Once the teacher expresses trust in the students' abilities and appreciation towards their choices, students can gain a feeling of ownership and responsibility of their own learning.

### Theories regarding Learner Autonomy in Teaching Foreign Language

There are many theories on promoting learner autonomy which differ from one another in their perspective and offset, but they have a lot in common and even have features that overlap greatly.

#### An Overview on Some Theories on Learner Autonomy

According to Dam (2011), the development of learner autonomy is 'a move from teacher-directed teaching environment to a learner-directed learning environment' autonomy (p.41), which complies with learner centeredness that is fundamental in theories on learner.

There are some important principles Dam (2011) highlights in the development of learner autonomy in an institutional context. Firstly, there is the fundamental notion of *choice*; according to Dam - having a choice enhances motivation, requires reflection which, in turn, heightens awareness of learning, shifts responsibility towards the learner, and has a positive impact on his or her self-esteem. Secondly, due to the external expectations and demands brought about by the institutional setting, clear guidelines need to be established so that the learners feel secure enough, and hence *willing* to take over. Thirdly, the focus ought to be shifted from teaching to learning. Lastly, Dam highlights the importance of *evaluation* in developing learner autonomy (pp43-45).

While Dam's classroom-based approach is primarily concerned with improving the *abilities* related to learner autonomy; in their model, Reinders and Lewis (2008) concentrate especially on improving *willingness* to take responsibility; for Reinders and Lewis (2008), the major obstacle in encouraging learner autonomy lies in teacher-centered students (p.97).

In their framework for developing learner autonomy, Reinders and Lewis (2008) suggest that the teacher should provide a rationale for everything that is done in the classroom, take it slowly, and build on what the students already know (p.99). Reinders and Lewis (2008) offer the following tips on developing learner autonomy in the language classroom.

Firstly, the teacher should encourage pair and group work by explaining explicitly why working with peers is important in developing language and learning skills.

Secondly, the teacher should provide opportunities for self-access language learning; in practice, this could mean a designated space inside or outside the classroom in which the students can work independently, but with the teacher's guidance and help readily accessible.

Thirdly, the teacher should draw their students' attention to the learning process and make it explicit by incorporating the use of diaries and portfolios in their teaching.

Lastly, while formal language teaching usually follows rather strict curricular demands and course designs, for Reinders and Lewis (2008), this is not a problem in developing learner autonomy as long as the teacher gives the students an overall understanding of the course outline, demands and objectives (pp.100-106).

#### Promoting Learner Autonomy in a Language Class

Now, the focus on this article will shift to how to promote learner autonomous in Speaking and Writing classes.

Speaking is not just the oral production of written language, but involves learners in the mastery of a wide range of sub skills, which added together, constitute an overall competence in the spoken language.

Many times it is observed that in Speaking test(s), students feel that the teacher has not judged them correctly. If the learners are given some criteria of speaking in class before any test, there can be no doubt in the learners' mind that they deserve the marks given by their teacher.

It is said that *choice* is a fundamental feature of learner autonomy- the commonly accepted view of learner autonomy being the ability to take charge of one's own learning implies that the learner makes independent choices about their own learning. In a Speaking class, when students are given topics chosen by the teachers, most of the time the students find it difficult or seem to be clueless. In such situations, a teacher can give full liberty to the students to choose their own topics and decide what they are going to speak about. This method will increase their level of confidence and will make them more responsible for their own learning.

Moreover, autonomy also means making use of self or peer assessment. When a student is required to give a presentation in a Speaking class, the other students in the class can be asked to give feedback to the presenter, before the teacher gives any feedback, so that comments from various peers can be gathered in an autonomous setting. However, some guidelines can be provided to the learners before they can speak on any topic. They are:

(1) Clarity; (2) Expression; (3) Intonation (4) Enunciation; (5) Fluency; (6) Accuracy; (7) Voice Projection; and (8) Pace.

These guidelines will increase students' awareness of the way they speak in their presentations.

#### Promoting Learner Autonomy in the Writing Class

Teachers need to make students aware that any piece of writing is an attempt to communicate something: that the writer has a goal or purpose in mind. Instead of choosing topics for them, they can be asked to choose their own topics for their tasks.

Before teachers can ask their students to write a paragraph or an essay, the following paragraph writing template or the outline of writing an essay can be shown and provided to the learners.

Paragraph Writing Template	
Title	
Topic sentence with a controlling idea:	
_____	
_____	
Supporting details:	
1.	_____
2.	_____
_____	
Concluding sentence :	
_____	
_____	

Apart from this, teachers can ask students to focus on the following points, such as formatting a paragraph, maintaining unity and coherence and mechanics of writing. The same criteria can be applied for writing an essay. The following outline of an essay can be provided to the learners.

#### Essay Writing Template

<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Topic: _____</p> <p>Hook: _____</p> <p><b>Background information:</b> _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Thesis statement: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Body paragraph (s)</b></p> <p>Details: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> _____</p> <p>_____</p>
---

Once the learners are familiar with this outline of writing an essay in any kind of test, they will have little to say if they do not get the required marks for this writing task. Moreover, teachers who deal with teaching academic writing can make the students familiar with their common errors through a checklist like the following:

- (1) Commonly confused words (e.g. *learn and teach; lend and borrow*)
- (2) Repetition of words, ideas (*I think, in my opinion*)
- (3) Inconsistent point of view (*using first person 'I' and then switching to 'we'*)
- (4) Commonly misused words/ misspelled words (e.g. *Please except my excuse; We use to love sweets*)
- (5) Colloquialism (*wanna, gonna, etc.*)
- (6) Use of correct punctuation marks (e.g. *My lucky number is 786 my favourite color is pink*)
- (7) Short form of the words (e.g. *'u' for 'you', 'b' for 'be', etc.*)

#### Conclusion

Learner autonomy is a multidimensional concept that requires specific skills and attributes from the learner. The learners need to become active in the learning process instead of being passive recipients of taught information. In this regard, the teacher plays an important role in boosting the learners' motivation and confidence to take charge of their own learning. This article aims to show the effectiveness and possible benefits of autonomous learning strategies at the tertiary level.

#### References

- Al-Kahtany, A. & Al-Refaai, I. (n.d.). Class handout for Speech Workshop.
- Benson, P. (1997). The Philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 192-203). London, UK: Longman.
- Crome, K., Farrar, R., & O'Connor, P. (2009). What is autonomous learning? *Discourse*, 9(1), 111-126. Retrieved from <http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/view.html/PrsDiscourseArticles/113>.
- Dam, L. (1995). *Autonomy from theory to classroom practice*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (2003). *A Handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: Enhancing academic practice*. Routledge, New York.
- Lynch, T. (2001). Promoting EAP learner autonomy in a second language university context (pp.390-403). In J. Flowerdew and M. Peacock (Eds.). *Research Perspectives on EAP Curriculum*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDonough, J. & Shaw, C. (1993). *Materials and methods in ELT*. (Second Edition). Blackwell Publishing.
- Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In Benson, P., & Voller, P. (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 192-203). London, UK: Longman.
- Reinders, H. & Lewis, M. (2008). Podquests. Language games on the go. In Andreade, M. (Ed.), *Language Games*. Alexandria: TESOL.
- Savage, A. & Mayer, P. (2005). *Effective academic writing 2*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

**Shanjida Halim** is a Bangladeshi national, working as a lecturer at the Department of English, College of Arts & Education for Girls, King Khalid University, Abha. She has an M.A. in English Literature and an M.A. in English Language Teaching (ELT). She has been teaching at the university level for 15 years.

**Tanzina Halim** comes from Bangladesh working as a lecturer at the Department of English, College of Arts & Education for Girls, King Khalid University, Abha. She has an M.A. in English Literature & Language. She has worked in BRAC University, Bangladesh, and has been in the teaching profession for 17 years.

**OXFORD**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

**SPELT**  
Society of  
Pakistan English  
Language Teachers

# ELT

## TRADITIONS & INNOVATIONS

# 31<sup>st</sup>

## SPELT International Conference 2015

### KARACHI

Nov 7th - 8th, 2015

Habib Public School  
M.T. Khan Road, Karachi

### Lubna Mohyuddin

0300-2256621, 0336-1199909  
speltconference@hotmail.com

### LAHORE

Nov 14th - 15th, 2015

### Aafia Qureshi

0322-4720620  
aafi111@live.com

### ISLAMABAD

Nov 14th - 15th, 2015

Fatima Jinnah  
Women University

### Dr. Wasima Shezad

0340-8012440, 0335-0545647  
speltislamabadofficial@gmail.com

### ABBOTTABAD

Nov 21st - 22nd, 2015

Modernage  
Girls College

### Mr. Rustam Ali

0345-9603918, 0232-3984874  
0333-5214139, rustam\_123@ymail.com

**REGISTRATIONS OPEN! Visit [www.spelt.org.pk](http://www.spelt.org.pk)**

In collaboration with Oxford University Press

**SPELT HOUSE:** 101, First Floor, Plot No. C-28, Kh-e-Ittehad, Lane 12, Phase II Ext., D.H.A., Karachi.

T: (021) 35313731, 35313733, 35313734 M: 0333-3754250

E: speltconference@hotmail.com, speltheadoffice@gmail.com W: www.spelt.org.pk, www.speltinfo.wordpress.com



Habib Public School

SPECTRUM | Y&R



BRITISH COUNCIL



NTS  
National Testing Service

SPECTRUM | Y&R



### KSAALT QUARTERLY

#### Editorial Board

Wai-Si El-Hassan

Dr. Phylline 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!

## KSAALT Publications Committee



The following are the members of our Publications Committee who have been working together formulating ideas in projecting a vision of what KSAALT can achieve in terms of published materials in the years to come:

- 1) Dr. Fauzia Shamim
- 2) Ms. Sameera Baloch
- 3) Ms. Mia Alharbi
- 4) Mr. Ammar Anas
- 5) Ms. Suzan Irmak
- 6) Mrs. Wai-Si El-Hassan

A big thank-you to Ms. Mia Alharbi for sharing and offering her ideas to our work. Unfortunately, she has a lot of commitments to fulfill this year, but we will keep in touch with Ms. Mia.

Finally, you will find more news from the Publications Committee in Issue One, Volume 8 of our newsletter on return after the summer.

**We wish you all a very happy vacation!**

## Abha Chapter

**Abha Chapter** has a new Chapter Representative: Dr. Mazeegha Al Tale'.

Below are the members of the Abha chapter office from June 2015 to May 2016:

Chapter Representative: **Dr. Mazeegha Al Tale'**

Chapter Secretary: **Ms. Amal Mewtwally**

Chapter Treasurer: **Dr. Areej Mustafa Asiri**

Member at Large: **Dr. Rizwana Wahid**

**Dr. Afeefa Banu**  
*Abha Chapter Representative*  
2013 – 2015

