

QATAR TESOL NEWS

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QATAR TESOL MINI-CONFERENCE TO BE HELD JANUARY 27TH

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The Qatar TESOL Miniconference will take place at the Liberal Arts and Science Building in Education City on Saturday, January 27th. Georgetown University and the Academic Bridge Program will host the event from 9:00 A.M. until 12:30 P.M. The theme is *What Works in Qatar*.

The event is free for all Qatar TESOL members. There will be a membership table on site for those who wish to become a member. The annual membership fee is 50 QR. A continental breakfast is provided. Poster sessions, presentations and discussions on interesting topics are scheduled.

The mini-conference is an opportunity for Qatar TESOL members to practice their stand-up skills. Some may choose to present their topic



The Liberal Arts and Science Building in Education City is the site of the Mini-conference on January 27th.

with revisions and additions at the Qatar TESOL International Conference April 13-14, hosted by College of the North Atlantic-Qatar.

Check the Qatar TESOL homepage for the latest informa-

tion about the schedule and speakers at www.qatartesol.org.

Be prepared to leave ID with the guard at the entrance gate to Education City.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY THROUGH THE U.S. EMBASSY IN DOHA

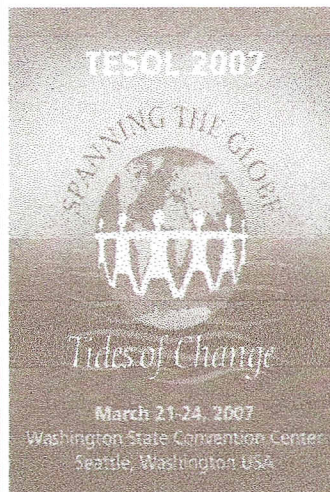
The U.S. Embassy in Doha is accepting applications for a couple of full-scholarships for Qatari candidates to go to the U.S. to act as a teaching assistant in an Arabic classroom in a number of U.S. universities. While working as an Arabic teaching assistant, the

participants will have the opportunity to take graduate level courses in Education, all costs covered by the scholarship. The nine-month program includes the experience of gaining college level teaching experience. This program is part of the prestigious

Fullbright program. The deadline is January 15th. More information is available on the Embassy website at <http://qatar.usembassy.gov>. Contact Stephen Kochuba, Cultural Attache for more information at KochubaSC@state.gov.

THE 41ST INTERNATIONAL TESOL, INC. CONVENTION

The 41st TESOL International Convention will be held in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.



from March 21st-24th at the Washington State Convention Center. The theme is *Spanning the Globe: Tides of Change*. The Plenary Speakers include Betty Azar, Mawi Asgedom, Diane Larsen-Freeman, Jun Liu, Ron Carter, and H. Douglas Brown.

More than 6,000 participants from more than 110 countries are expected to attend the conference. A variety of program events and activities include Academic Sessions, Spotlight Sessions, Colloquia, InterSections, Energy Breaks, Hot Topics, Discussion Groups, the Leadership Development

Program Certificate Program, the Networking Mall, the Electronic Village and the Job MarketPlace. Pre-Institute and Post-Institute Programs are also offered for an additional fee.

Participants can also pre-register on the website for educational visits to a variety of local primary and secondary school programs as well as for tours to regional sites of cultural and historical interest.

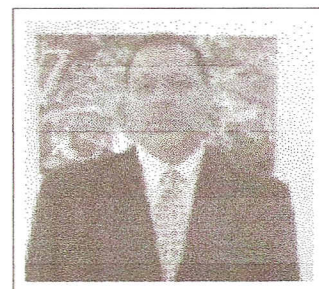
Early registration with the discount rate closes on February 2nd.

"The Global Individual Membership includes one full year of membership in TESOL for \$40 per year... The Global Electronic Membership... for only \$24."

THE BEST OF QATAR TESOL IN SEATTLE!

Dr. Mohammed Abbas Ali of Bahrain will represent Qatar TESOL as "The Best of Qatar TESOL" at the 41st TESOL International Convention in Seattle. Each year different TESOL affiliates around the globe are given the opportunity to nominate a speaker to present the best of their affiliate at the international convention.

Dr. Abbas spoke on *Creating a Collaborative English Department Culture* at the 2006 Qatar TESOL International Conference. The results of this action research project encouraged educators to continue to advance their professional expertise, skills and knowledge and to work collectively on common issues and problems.



Dr. Mohammed Abbas will also speak on the panel, *Tides of Change in the Arabian Gulf*.

TESOL, INC. INTERNATIONAL OFFERS GLOBAL DISCOUNTED MEMBERSHIP

TESOL offers two membership options to anyone who is either a native-born current resident or a current legal resident of any country identified as eligible by certain criteria. These global memberships carry full membership rights and privileges, but with varying member benefits. Both new and current (renewing) members may join

or renew in either of the two categories.

The *Global Individual Membership (GIM)* includes one full year of membership in TESOL for \$40 per year. GMI members may subscribe to TESOL Quarterly for an additional \$45 per year or add additional interest sections or caucuses for \$8 each.

The *Global Electronic Membership (GEM)* includes one year of membership for only \$24. The print magazine, *Essential Teacher* is not included. GME members may add access to the TESOL Quarterly (electronic copy only) for an additional \$25. They may also add additional interest sections or caucuses for \$8 each.

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE READING HABITS OF QATAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

BY JAMES MOODY

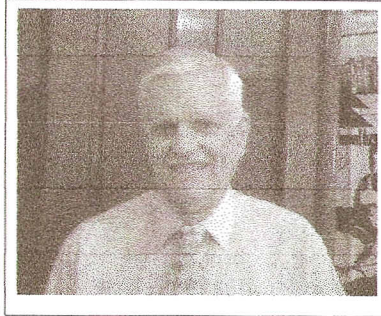
Abstract

Reading is considered to be at the heart of an ELT curriculum, and attention has been given, in Qatar and elsewhere, to the development of methods for teaching this skill. However, class work needs to be supported by extensive reading, which students undertake independently in an attempt to apply the techniques acquired in the classroom. Determining students' actual reading habits is necessary in designing an extensive reading program. One way to do this is to ask students directly about

their reading. The results of a questionnaire given to second and third year students majoring in English at the University of Qatar are reported and their implications are discussed.

Introduction

Reports in the local press have stressed that reading should be at the core of a language curriculum, in both English (Lindenstrauss, 2004) and Arabic (Call for campaign to promote reading habit, 2006). Methods for teaching reading in Qatar have been proposed (Lachine, 2006;



James Moody teaches in the QU Department of Foreign Languages.

Moody, 2005, 2004). But unless a student is an avid reader, reading abilities remain dormant because they are not adequately reinforced.

Cont on page 4.

QATAR TESOL NEWSLETTER RECEIVES AN INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER

The Qatar TESOL Newsletter has an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). This eight-digit number identifies periodical publications, including electronic serials.

ISSN have been assigned since the 1970s and universally accepted within the print publishing world as a means

of identifying serials. Changes in the editorial practices linked to the development of the Internet led the ISSN to evolve and to extend its scope.

More than one million ISSN numbers have been assigned so far. The ISSN is managed by a world wide network of 81

National Centers coordinated by an International Centre based in Paris, which is backed by UNESCO and the French Government. The ISSN is used by various partners throughout the information chain: libraries, subscription agents, researchers, information scientists and newsagents.

"... reading should be at the core of a language curriculum, in both English... And Arabic..."

TEACHING TIP WINNER: A CREATIVE WAY TO BUILD A STORY BY ARSHIYA-NAGEEN AHMED, M.ED.

Arshiya-Nageen Ahmed is the fifth winner of the Teaching Tips Contest sponsored by Macmillan Publishers. Nageen wins a copy of *Learning Teaching*, a teacher resource book by Jim Scrivener, plus the verb wheel pack.



Rationale:

I have observed that all my

students are creative in their own ways when they are encouraged to use their imagination. I believe that creativity plays a huge role in whatever work we do; thus, I feel strongly that



Arshiya-Nageen Ahmed teaches at New Horizons.

students are bound to interact well in an English-speaking climate when they express their unique thoughts in the class. In this activity students will be able to use their imaginations to

Cont on page 4.

A CREATIVE WAY TO BUILD A STORY BY ARSHIYA-NAGEEN AHMED *CONT. FROM PAGE 3*

to build on a story and be as descriptive as possible.

Quick Guide:

Key Words: Speaking, Listening

Learner English Level: Intermediate

Learner Maturity: Elementary through Adult

Preparation Time: 10 minutes

Activity Time: one (1) hour

Guidelines:

- Appropriate for a class of 10 to 12 students.
- Urge the students to collaborate as a team in building the story.
- It does not matter if the story parts do not connect smoothly. (However, the teacher might correct the students at appropriate moments in the lesson when the conversational flow is not affected.)
- Encourage the students to make any changes to the story or even add more

characters.

- Support the use of onomatopoeia and dialogues.

The Activity:

- Begin telling a fictitious story.
- Call out the names of students at random to continue the story.
- Call on every student so that each one contributes to the story plot. (This way each student will have a chance to speak in the class.)
- During the final 15 minutes of the lesson, suggest that the students begin the ending to the story.

The Benefits:

- Enhances descriptive vocabulary without the need of visual aids.
- Maintains student attention as they listen to what their classmates produce spontaneously.
- Students have fun!

*The Second Qatar
TESOL International
Conference to be held
April 13-14 at the
College of the North
Atlantic-Qatar.*

*Check the website for the
latest information at
www.qatartesol.org.*

INVESTIGATION INTO READING HABITS BY JAMES MOODY *CONT FROM PAGE 3.*

All effective language education depends on practice: giving students the opportunity to make mistakes, to renegotiate, and to apply the skills acquired to a new task. Thus, serious attention to the development of extensive reading is crucial. To accomplish this, it is helpful for a teacher to know how much and what students actually read, why they read and what their attitudes are to reading.

A questionnaire was designed and administered to collect such information, the underlying assumption being that finding a solution entails analyzing the problem (refer to Appendix A). If in a teacher's opinion students are not performing up to expectations or are not achieving their full potential, it may be because they are not using English in appropriate ways outside the class. All teachers have intuitions about how much (or how little)

Students read on their own, but empirical information provides a sounder foundation for teaching.

The questionnaire was administered during the spring semester, 2006, to 32 female students studying for a B.A. in English at the University of Qatar. It was distributed to volunteer students in classes in Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Building and Advanced Grammar Practice. Most of these students were in their second and third years, although a few were in their fourth (final) year.

The Study

It is perhaps surprising that in response to the first question, about 33% of the students
Cont on page 5.

INVESTIGATION INTO READING HABITS

BY JAMES MOODY

CONT FROM PAGE 3.

who are English majors had never read a *complete book in English*. Seven had done so six months before.

The answers to the second questions reveal that the figures for reading *English language newspapers* are hardly better, as almost 66% read one less than once a month and only four of them once a week or more.

Question three was included to gauge whether reading English has a practical use, and almost 33% claim that they have responded to *English advertisements*. *English magazines* seem more popular than newspapers, as almost all claimed to read one at least once a month in answer to item four.

Reading English on the *Internet* is more common than reading the print media. A significant majority (84%) responded in question five (27 out of 32) that they read English on the Internet once a week or more, with 33% doing so everyday. In response to item six, most said that they read English on the Internet to find specific information about particular interests and topics. More than 50% use English to correspond with friends on the Internet, another practical application of language skills. A fairly small proportion of respondents (22%) to question six follow the news in English on the Internet; this is similar to the response to item two about reading newspapers.

Most students had been introduced to the University library prior to completing this survey with special attention to the Reference Section. The fact that more than 33% or 13, according to the results of question seven, have never used *English language reference books* reinforces the results of item six, suggesting that the Internet is now the reference tool of choice. The infrequent use of English reference books is also suggested by the fact that in the last part of question seven, 67% (12 of the 18) of those who said that they have used the Reference Section chose to give definite figures for the times they have done so (from one to six). They did not mention the frequency of use over a period of time, like the other five respondents, which seems the response expected of a habitual user.

Replies to question eight show that the overall purpose of the survey participants for reading English is almost equally divided between edu-

cation and entertainment. Again, as with newspapers and the Internet, keeping up with current events in English has a relatively low priority. The answers to item nine concerning students' perceptions of their problems in reading English indicate that they consider *vocabulary* a greater barrier to effective reading than *grammar*. Not being able to discriminate between main and supporting points in a text features as a difficulty for almost 33% of the students. Although 12 students (38%) in question nine claimed that not being able to find interesting texts to read is a problem; only four (13%) said that materials were more easily available in Arabic, a point considered in the conclusions below.

Answers to question ten show unequivocally that students are *motivated to improve their English reading abilities*, as all the respondents indicated they wanted to read more in English. This question was included partly to test the hypothesis that among students in Qatar reading English outside class is considered beyond normal expectations. But the answers show that this suspicion is unfounded; readers of English are respected, not ridiculed.

The results of question 11 probably reflect the fact that *Arabic is the medium of instruction for most courses at the university* although reading English does figure into courses in computer science.

The responses to the twelfth item may be taken positively; most students claim to use a *dictionary* when reading. (All students majoring in English receive a copy of Longman's *Dictionary of Advanced English*.) On the other hand, they might suggest an over-reliance on the dictionary and a reluctance to guess the meanings of words from their parts or the context.

The fact that all but three of the respondents (91%) claimed they *read English aloud* to other people (question 13) shows that reading can be a practical activity, shared with others, and, like the responses to the tenth question, that it is considered an accomplishment in which to take pride.

Question 14 was included mainly to help the Cont on page 6.

*The 13th TESOL
Arabia International
Conference to be held
March 15-17th at the
J.W. Marriott in
Dubai. Check the
website at
www.tesolarabia.org for
the latest information.*

INVESTIGATION INTO READING HABITS

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Instructor in organizing the course. Most of the answers are too general or diverse to have much significance. However, the fact that 11 students (34%) mentioned *improving vocabulary* specifically in an open-ended question as a reading need shows this, like the answers to the ninth item, to be a major area of concern.

Conclusions

These results have several implications. For example, vocabulary emerges as more important in students' eyes than grammar. Keeping up with current events by reading news reports in English, both on the Internet and in newspapers, could be part of an extensive reading program. Even when the "same" news is available in Arabic, reading it in English can offer new perspectives and lead to comparisons between reports in different languages. And news offers an ever-changing supply of texts.

The answers to question nine suggest that students may not be reading widely in either Arabic or English. Many educators probably assume that students read Arabic better than English. But following the advice of Bell (2006), the author gave the students involved in the survey two short passages to read, one in Arabic and one in English, shown for 10 seconds on the OHP screen. Bell's research indicates that this activity would help students apply to the reading of English the strategies they already use in reading Arabic. But most of the students claimed that they could read the English text more easily than the Arabic. Does this suggest that they read English more than Arabic? A similar questionnaire on Arabic might yield interesting results.

No major claims are made for either the questionnaire itself or the significance of responses from one fairly small group of students. Some questions might have been better formulated: for example, items four, five and six (concerning reading magazines and Internet texts) could have specified the amount of time—not just the frequency—used for these activities. Still, the responses are suggestive of the general situation among tertiary students in Qatar. It is recommended that all English teachers conduct a similar investigation to obtain a profile of student reading habits. Knowledge of what students do, their attitudes, and how they perceive their needs will help in teaching reading more effectively.

References

- Bell, E. (2006, April). *Authentic materials—how authentic?* Paper presented at the First Qatar TESOL International Conference. Doha, Qatar.
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- Moody, J. (2004, October). *The teaching of reading as interactive communication: An example and suggestions for classroom use*. Paper presented at the QTEN Conference, Doha, Qatar.
- Moody, J. (2005, March). *Pragmatics and reading: Towards a teaching methodology*. Paper presented at the 11th Annual TESOL Arabia International Conference, Dubai, U.A.E.

Appendix A: The Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions honestly. You do not need to write your name on this paper.

- When was the last time you read a complete book in English (a book more than 100 pages long)?
 - never (11)
 - one year ago or more (4)
 - six months ago (3)
 - two months ago (5)
 - one month ago (6)
 - three weeks ago (1)
 - last week (2)

(Note: Options were not given in the question.)

- How often do you read a newspaper in

Cont on page 7.

TESOL, Inc. invites book proposals on NNEST issues. Visit the website at www.tesol.org and click on "Publications" to find more details.

INVESTIGATION INTO READING HABITS

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English? (put a tick beside one)

- A. Never (5)
- B. Less than once a month (14)
- C. About once a month (14)
- D. About once a week (3)
- E. Everyday (1)

(Note: Options were given in the question.)

3. Have you ever bought something because of an advertisement you read in an English newspaper?

- A. No (22)
- B. Yes (10)

4. How often do you read a magazine in English? (Put a tick beside one.)

- A. Never (2)
- B. Less than once a month (12)
- C. About once a month (14)
- D. Once a week (4)

5. How often do you read English on the Internet? (Put a tick beside one.)

- A. Never (0)
- B. Less than once a month (5)
- C. About once a month (0)
- D. About once a week (16)
- E. Everyday (11)

6. If you ever read English on the Internet, what do you read? (Put a tick beside as many as you want to.)

- A. Messages from friends (16)
- B. News (7)
- C. Your favorite websites about your hobby or interest (21)
- D. Information about specific topics that you enter into a search engine like Google (23)
- E. Others? (Write what they are.)
Answers included; chat rooms, MSN, forums, lyrics of songs, fashion, food, poems, biographies, & music.

7. Have you ever used the English Reference Section in the university library?

A. Never (13)

B. Yes (18)

If yes, what kind of reference books did you use (encyclopedia, dictionary, atlas, others?)

Encyclopedia (6)

Dictionary (7)

Atlas (2)

Other responses included; literature (2), linguistics (2), grammar (1), stories (1) & geography (1).

How often have you used reference books?

Often, whenever I do research (1)

Once a week (1)

Once or twice a semester (2)

Twice a year (1)

Six times altogether (2)

Five times altogether (2)

Two or three times altogether (1)

More than once (2)

Only once (6)

Total (18)

8. What would you say is your main reason for reading English? (Put a tick beside as many as you wish.)

A. study or education (25)

B. entertainment or enjoyment (24)

C. To know what is going on in the world (11)

D. Others? (Write what they are.)

Others included; reading novels, communicating with friends, improving my English & "because I like to read English."

9. What problems do you have reading English? (Put a tick beside as many as you wish.)

A. Finding interesting things to read (12)

B. Having difficulty understanding the meaning of words (19)

C. Not understanding sentences because they are too long and complicated (11)

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ThaiTESOL
International Conference
January 26-28th
Imperial Queen's Park
Bangkok
www.thaitesol.org

INVESTIGATION INTO READING HABITS

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- D. Understanding separate sentences, but not the main idea (10)
 Yes (21)
 Sometimes (6)
 No (3)
- E. Reading too slowly (5)
 Not answered (1)
- F. Not having any reason to read English (because everything you want to read is in Arabic) (4)
- G. Other problems? Explain. (One responded that she did not have time to read.)

10. What do you think about other students who read more English than you do? (Tick one.)
- A. Wish you could be like them (31)
 (One responded that she wanted to be the best.)
- B. Laugh at them (0)
- C. Believe they are strange (0)

11. Do you ever read anything in English for courses you are taking at the university outside of the English Department? If so, which ones?
- A. Yes (7)
- B. No (20)
- C. Not answered (5)

Courses mentioned included: computer science or information technology (4), social studies (2), History (1) and Islamic art (1).

12. Do you usually use a dictionary when you are reading?

13. Do you ever read out loud to other people in English (for example, to younger brothers or sister)?
- Yes (28)
 No (2)
 Not answered (1)

14. What do you want or expect to learn about reading from taking this course?
- Improve vocabulary and understand words (11)
 Read more and better (7)
 Improve reading and speaking (3)
 Understand complex sentences (3)
 Read on more topics (1)
 Read longer paragraphs (1)
 Read faster (1)
 Develop confidence in reading aloud (1)
 Know where to find interesting readings (1)
 Understand the main idea (1)
 Read different kinds of texts (1)
 Improve my English (1)
 No answer (7)

Note: One student did not answer questions seven to 14 (the second page of the question-

*Symposium on English
 Language Assessment*

Kyiv, Ukraine

October 26, 2007

*Check the website at
 www.tesol.org for details.*

LETTER FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

Dear Colleagues,

The Conference Committee is meeting regularly and plans are moving forward to make this the best conference in Doha ever. Kourosh Lachini, who teaches English at the University of Qatar, promises an interesting schedule of

events as the Conference Program Chair. Submit proposals as soon as possible. Directions are on the website at www.qatarteseol.org.

Eleanor Kenny and Randall Wolansky are making arrangements as the Site Co-chairs.

If interested in volunteering, contact me at my email (mbirchall@qf.org.qa). See you at the conference!

Sincerely,
 Michael



www.qatartesol.org

Qatar TESOL was founded on April 2, 2005 . . .

. . . when the Qatar TESOL President, Sarah Al-Kuwari, signed the affiliate agreement with TESOL, Inc. The purpose of Qatar TESOL is to establish a network of teachers, supervisors and researchers who are committed to improving teaching in English as a Foreign or Second Language in Qatar and/or the region.

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