

ELC MIRROR

VOLUME 8

SEMESTER 1 / AY2021-2022



*Oman 2040 Vision:
A Focus on Education*

رؤية عُمان
2040
Oman Vision

نتقدم بثقة
Moving Forward
with Confidence

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ELC MIRROR AY 2021-2022

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S

Note

"The theme of the ELC Mirror's 8th edition harmonizes with Oman 2040 vision by focusing on education."

The academic year 2021-2022 marks a milestone for our team as we will endeavor to publish biannually as well as enhance our periodical with new sections.

It is an ambitious bid; nonetheless, the ELC Mirror holds true to its mission to be the primary sounding board for our staff and students, as well as to aspire to be the vanguard of truth and information for past, current or future events around the ELC, the University, the Dhofar region, and even the Sultanate.

The theme of the 8th edition harmonizes with Oman 2040 vision by focusing on education. To attain this, the ELC Mirror believes that increasing the quality of basic and higher education and furthering scientific and educational curricula across Oman are deemed necessary.

With high hopes, the ELC Mirror supports Oman in achieving its 2040 Vision. May God continue to bless the citizens and residents of this wonderful country!

Dr. Claire Orpilla



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

In the midst of the ongoing global pandemic, we face unprecedented challenges and hurdles moving forward. Our recovery process has been a monumental challenge but the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Salalah proved its remarkable ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic, fast-paced technology driven approach to student learning. In my personal estimation, this global crisis has elevated the urgency of our mission, goals and core values more than ever. I am profoundly inspired and proud to observe our Departments and Centers work collaboratively to continue delivering quality education to our students.

The English Language Center (ELC) merits due recognition as it continues to achieve distinction through different initiatives, research activities, personal guidance to our Foundation students, and to foster the creative skills of our students. The University highly appreciates the management and the GFP staff in their continuous efforts to keep pace with new technologies and to adapt to the changing students' needs. Similarly, our appreciation should be extended to our GFP students who have become more resilient, hardworking, and flexible in adapting to blended learning.



DR. MOHAMMED RASHID ALMAMARI
Dean of the University of Technology & Applied Sciences - Salalah

The 8th edition of the ELC Mirror revolves on the theme “Oman 2040 Vision, a Focus on Education” which is timely and relevant because it highlights the importance of higher education in achieving the country’s target of producing globally competitive talents. I would like to acknowledge the team behind the success of this Magazine.

Finally, on behalf of the entire administration at UTAS-Salalah, I would like to congratulate the ELC for this huge achievement. I look forward to more milestones from the Center and I assure you of the University management’s full support.

FROM THE DESK OF THE HOC-ELC

The English Language Center is at the forefront of responding to our students' needs to help them rise and succeed above all challenges. The Center remains committed (and will always be) to providing learning opportunities to equip our students with the right skills, developing their competencies, and assisting them in realizing their important roles in nation building.

To build upon and sustain the gains of the previous academic years, the ELC has identified its academic direction towards the Oman 2040 vision in order to help more Omani students improve their English and to qualify for further studies in the Post-Foundation Program or to enhance their job opportunities.

In this light, it gives me pleasure to welcome all readers to the launching of our 8th edition of the ELC Mirror produced by the ELC, UTAS -Salalah. The theme of the magazine *Oman 2040 Vision: A Focus on Education* is of special significance as it is the exalted aim for all parts concerned with English language education among teachers and students.

I would like to thank the ELC magazine committee for giving us the opportunity to explore the achievements of the Center. Over the years, the magazine has kept us abreast with up-to-date knowledge and functional education, which are in alignment with Oman



SAEED SALIM AL-MASHIKI
Head of the English Language Center

2040 Vision. In addition, I would like to thank the staff and student contributors who are instrumental to the success of this 8th edition.

Finally, I invoke the Almighty to help Oman succeed in achieving its 2040 Vision.

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE

HOS-CTM

The preparation for the new semester of this academic year 2022 required many arrangements to be made to receive the new intake students who come from different parts of the Sultanate. Therefore, the ELC management, along with the staff, have been working together to make it all set for the students. The most important thing to achieve is to create a conducive learning environment to motivate them to learn better.

Taking into consideration the students' background, customs and learning habits are contributing factors to their education. As far as this matter is concerned, students centered- learning is a demand to achieve our learning outcomes. Moreover, the action plans prepared by the ELC all go to one target which is to raise our standards of teaching and learning.

Our passion never ends once it comes to our dreams and plans for better future and life. We do believe that the hard work and good planning should be sustained for the same reasons. However, there might be some frustrating influences around, but we should not stop trying to strive for the country's development. That is our genuine role in the higher education where all our efforts are focused on improving readiness for the society.



KHAYAR MOHAMMED ALAMRI
Head of Section - Curriculum & Teaching Methods

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE HOS-ELP



SALIM SAID AL MAASHANI

Head of Section - English Language Programs

The first semester was considered fruitful in the English Language Center at UTAS-Salalah. The administration, staff, and students played well their respective roles amid the challenges brought by the global pandemic.

The English Language Programs (ELP) Section managed to conduct smoothly all kinds of exams in the General Foundation Program (GFP) for English, Math, and IT, whether online or in-person exams, adhering strictly to the University examination policies and to the safety and health protocols set by the Supreme Committee to prevent the widespread transmission of the new Omicron virus.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our GFP and PFP staff for their hard work and dedication during the first semester. Indeed, their impeccable cooperation is highly appreciated!

As we embark on another semester, I would like to solicit again for everyone's support to the ELP Section and the ELC in particular, and to the University in general. Let us remain resilient, steadfast, and strong in overcoming challenges and in performing our tasks towards the achievement of the University Mission, Vision, and Goals.



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A Focus on Education

by Sandrine Sjolund

Oman Vision 2040 is the Sultanate's plan to maintain pace with regional and global change, to foster economic competitiveness and social well-being, to stimulate growth, and to foster confidence in the economic, social and developmental spheres of the country. It stems from a Royal Directive you can read below:

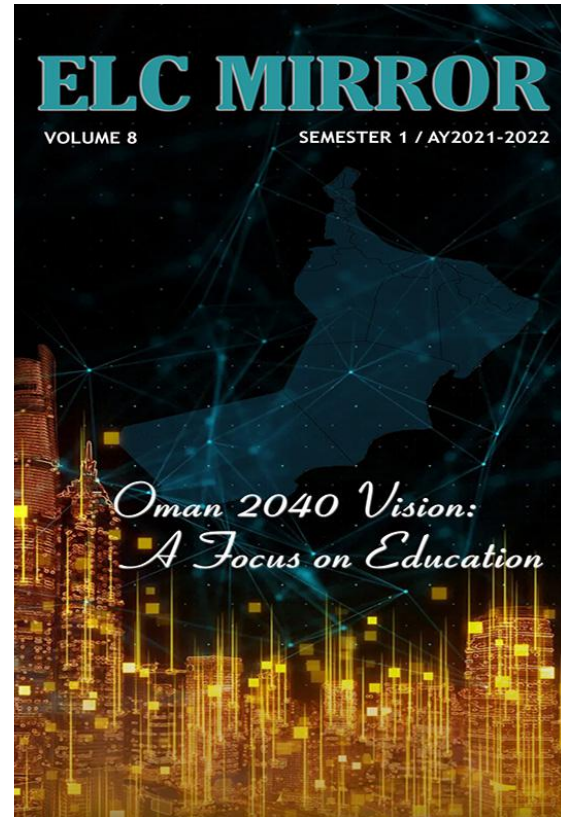
"Developing the future vision (Oman 2040) with mastery and high precision in light of broad societal consensus and with the participation of all segments of society. The vision should be relevant to the socio-economic context and objectively foresee the future, to be recognised as a guide and key reference for planning activities in the next two decades."

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said bin Taimur. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Vision 2040 encompasses all spheres of society, from education to healthcare, law to natural resources, talent to employment. It lays down the foundations for a creative, knowledge-based society, whose members are proud of their identity and culture, committed to their civic values and who live in dignity.

The following are the 2040 targets as defined in the vision 2040:

- Global innovation index
- Skills global competitiveness index
- Real GDP per capita (growth rate)
- Real GDP growth
- Government effectiveness, world governance indicators
- Environmental performance index
- FDI net inflow percentage of GDP
- Non-oil share of GDP
- Omanis share of jobs created in the private sector jobs



In the past decades, the Sultanate of Oman based its economy on oil revenues and used that revenue to develop many economic, social and cultural sectors for diversifying its economy.

Today, Oman is aware that the country's economy and society can no longer rely on non-renewable resources but has to redouble its efforts to invest instead in innovation and knowledge.

To attain this, the document states that the quality of basic and higher education must increase and scientific and educational curricula must be developed, so that graduates gain competitive qualifications and employability skills. Those graduates will then have a decent level of productivity and competitiveness to meaningfully participate in knowledge-based economy.

Furthermore, the plan also concerns educational institutions, faculty and staff, by applying international standards for accreditation and the use of more modern teaching and learning techniques.

Values of competition and qualification should encourage individuals to seek high-ranking jobs based on merit through the establishment of a motivating educational and vocational training system. Furthermore, talent, creativity and entrepreneurship need to be nurtured more extensively.



The following are the national priorities of Oman as defined in the Vision 2040:

- Governance of state's administrative bodies, resources and projects
- Legislative, judicial and oversight system
- Environment and natural resources
- Development of governorates and sustainable cities
- Private sector, investment and international cooperation
- Labour market and employment
- Economic diversification and fiscal sustainability
- Economic leadership and management
- Well-being and social protection
- Citizenship, identity, national heritage and culture
- Health
- Education, learning, scientific, research and national capabilities

Omani society is driven by a strong Omani identity that is tolerant of other identities and cultures. This allows open, non-judgmental exchanges, which in turn, leads to progress in line with the national priorities to meet the 2040 targets.

Since we are an educational institution, I would like to highlight the 2040 vision on education, so that teachers at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences understand what is meant by the “bigger picture.”

It is interesting to note that the first priority strategic direction mentioned in the 2040 vision plan is education. Education is where it all starts. The document insists on the fact that education has to be inclusive, that learning is lifelong and that scientific research leads to a knowledge-based society. The plan is to develop competitive national talents through the different levels of the educational system and to improve educational outcomes in order to build Omanis' confidence in their abilities.



Below are the educational and vocational objectives as defined in the vision 2040:

- A high-quality educational system with societal partnership
- An integrated and independent system to govern and evaluate the educational system against national and international standards
- Value-enforcing curricula that incorporate Islamic principles and Omani identity; are consistent with the contemporary requirements of sustainable development and future skills, and support the diversification of learning pathways
- National talents with dynamic capabilities and skills that are competitive locally and internationally
- Diversified and sustainable funding sources for education, scientific research and innovation
- An effective national system that nurtures scientific research, innovation and creativity to build a knowledge-based economy and society
- A system that empowers human capabilities in the educational sector.



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STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR FALL '21

by Muna Salim Kashoob

The Staff Professional Development (SPD) committee of the English Language Center at UTAS-Salalah provided a number of opportunities for the academic staff to reach their full potential professionally and personally by having organized four webinars and one in-person workshop during the first semester of Academic Year 2021-2022.

The ELC administration, headed by Saeed Al-Mashiki, commended the SPD committee for putting efforts towards the realization of the following programs:

CONSTRUCTING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ELT AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ENGLISH TEACHERS' VOICES

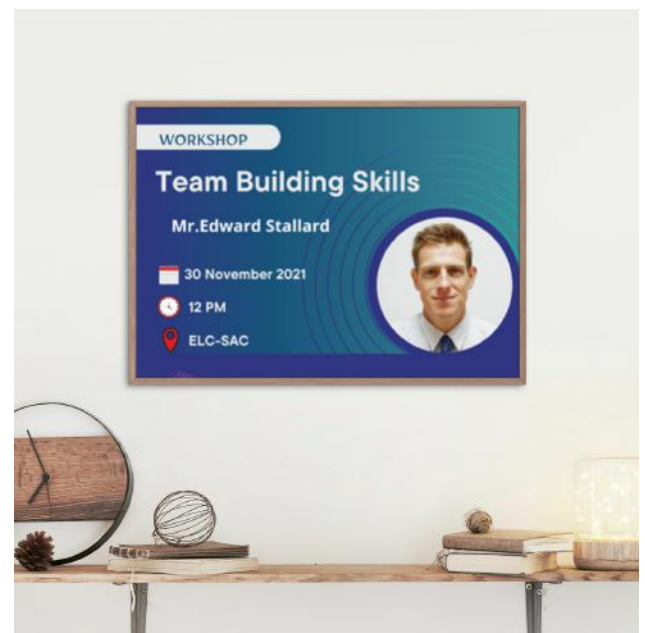
The first SPD webinar focused on the challenges faced by the ELT teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was presented by Mrs. Manal Alabsy, an ELC lecturer, to around 40 participants on October 12, 2021. Participants gained insightful ways how to adapt and thrive in the field of ELT during the pandemic era.





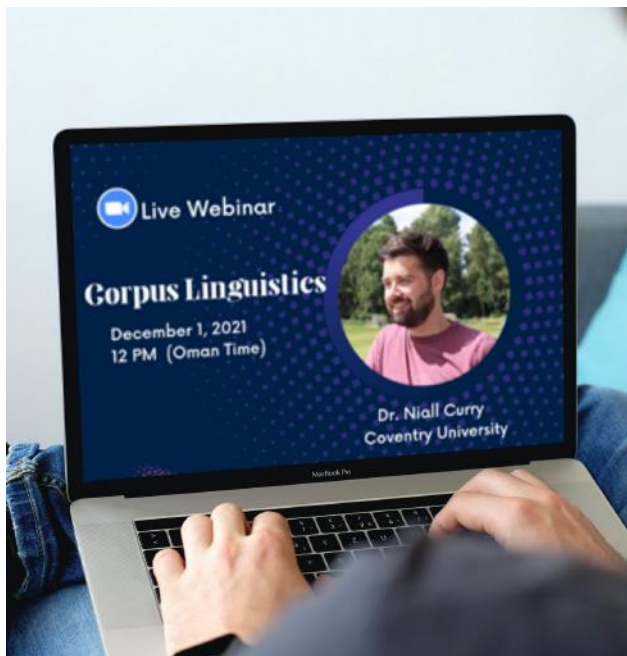
MAKING LEARNING PERSONAL

The second webinar was delivered by Dr. Reynolds, a guest speaker from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, on November 8, 2021. The webinar shed light on various techniques in increasing students' engagement with their learning, such as foregrounding “metalanguage” about learning in the class, asking students to complete “exit tickets” after each class, and incorporating tasks that require reflection.



TEAM BUILDING SKILLS

The third SPD program was an in-person workshop on team building. It was conducted by Mr. Edward Stallard, an ELC lecturer, in the Self-Access Center on November 30, 2021. It was an interactive workshop about the essential skills in creating a team. Participants were asked to build towers, which were judged according to their height, aesthetics, and strength.



CORPUS LINGUISTICS

“Corpus Linguistics” was the fourth webinar. Dr. Niall Curry from Coventry University in the UK talked about what corpus linguistics is and how it can help with English language teaching and learning. About 50 participants joined this webinar on December 1, 2021.



LEADERSHIP

The last webinar was presented by Mr. Salim Al-Mashani, the HoS-English Language Program, on December 13, 2021. He talked about the essence of leadership, types of leadership, and attributes of leaders. He highlighted the important roles of leaders in the higher education sector.

GFP INDUCTION

by Dr. Claire Orpilla



Since the global outbreak of Covid-19, the English Language Center has been conducting its induction program online for new students of the General Foundation Program. Last October 5, 2021, however, the ELC managed to convene around 320 students in the Multi-purpose Hall to familiarize them with academic procedures and learning platforms and resources, policies, as well as the culture and norms at UTAS-Salah. Safety precautionary measures against the Coronavirus were strictly observed during the event.

Saeed Salim Al-Mashiki, the Head of the ELC, delivered the welcome message. He gave a diorama of the ELC structure and the comprehensive training program offered by the ELC prior to students' admission to the Post-Foundation Program. He concluded by stressing the role of the Center in honing students' language skills that are vital for specialized programs.





In addition, Samha Al Mashali, the Level 1 Coordinator, explained the GFP-English Course Assessment, Delivery Plan, class schedule, and learning resources. She also discussed the curriculum and rules for GFP Math and IT.



The third speaker was Amal Alwadi, a member of the Induction Committee. She presented the University Vision, Mission, Goals, and Graduate Attributes. Also, she demonstrated how to engage with the learning platforms used at UTAS-Salalah.

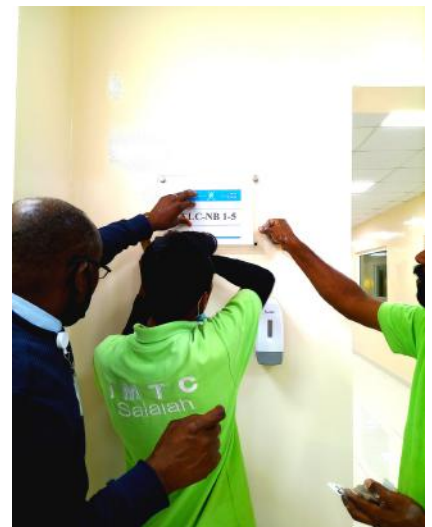
Finally, Khalid Al-Ghafri a member of the Grievance Committee, enlightened the students about the University policies on student discipline, student appeal, student feedback, student grievances, and plagiarism.

Acrylic wall sign holders around ELC



The ELC (primary and newly constructed) buildings received a facelift as acrylic wall sign holders were mounted in front of classrooms and offices.

The ELC would like to thank the UTAS-Salalah administration for providing the acrylic wall sign holders.



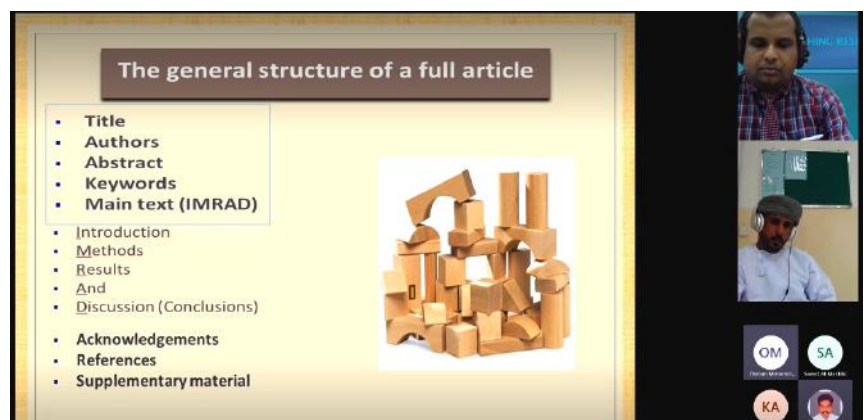
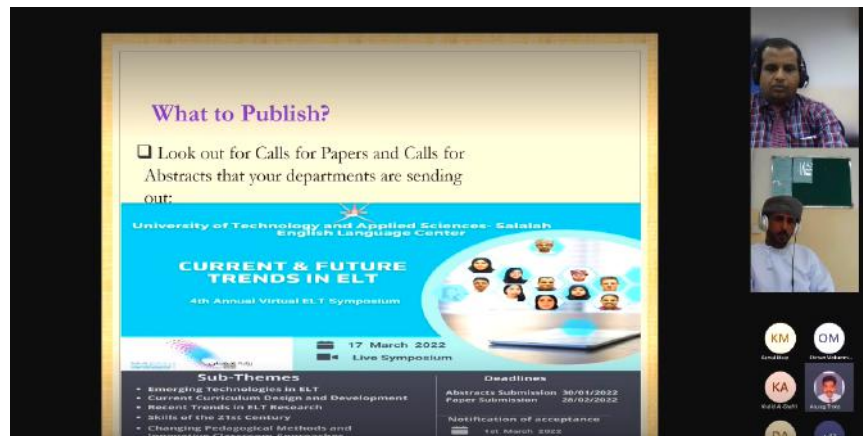
PUBLISHING RESEARCH PAPERS IN JOURNALS

by Dr. Aju Samuel Thomas

A webinar on “Publishing Research Papers in the Journals” was conducted for the ELC staff on the 27th of December, 2021 by Dr. Yasir Al Yafaei, the newly minted doctorate holder.

Dr. Al Yafaei explained the possible strategies to publish research papers in different journals, the process of finding good journals for publishing papers, the challenges that may come up during the whole process of publication, and the ways to overcome such challenges.

Saeed Al Mashiki, the HoC of ELC, encouraged the staff to engage in fruitful research by focusing on the different aspects of English Language Teaching. He thanked Dr. Aju Thomas and other members of the Research and Consultancy Committee for organizing the said webinar.



Photography Workshop

by Mariam Al Sabbah & Jogi George

The English Clubs, formerly known as the ELC Forum, organized a photography workshop for the Foundation students on December 14, 2021 in the Self-Access Center. The guest speaker was Anas Al Dheeb, a renowned Omani photographer in Salalah. He discussed the basic principles of photography and shared his best captured photos of nature, people, and landmarks. As a sequel to that event, a photography contest will be conducted in semester 2, AY 2021-2022.



THE POINT IN GRAMMAR

by Dr. Marc Carmichael Brown

To Octopi, or noctopi, Latin is the question?

We all say it and we all do it, and I guess we might even feel a wee bit smug about it too. But what if I told you the plural of octopus was not octopi, shock? horror!? That's right, but wait, I hear you say, the plural of cactus is cacti. Yes, that is correct, and yes, both octopus and cactus are nouns. Admittedly, in writing or in scientific papers, the plural form of the word is cacti. However, even though it is common to pronounce the plural of the word cactus as cacti, cactus is also correct.

On the other hand, octopus is, as much as we assume subject to the same grammar rule, by dint of the word coming down to us from Latin (again not true), this is in fact not the case. Take, for instance, the Latin word for a soldier of an element of an early Roman legion, Triarius (singular), the plural Triarii, or more commonly fungus, and fungi. This rule for pluralizing is only one of a half dozen rules for pluralizing that exist in Latin grammar, some of which are retained in modern English. The point is, there is an assumption that since both words cactus and octopus end in 'us' they must be governed by the same rule.

but this is not the case. Octopus is derived from Greek októpus and since it is a direct translation to English the word is pluralized much like any other plural noun in the language. The correct plural form of octopus is, octopuses. The irony here being, cactus is also Greek, however, having spent time floating around in Latin, classified in the language, modern English speakers burdened by the nuances of English grammar have mistaken one for the other. It would be fair to say, we have all made this mistake, but it does not mean we are ignorami (or is it ignoramuses?!)



Image credit to the owner



Photo credit to the owners

BLENDED LEARNING IN THE PANDEMIC ERA

by Jon Chittick

In the past semester, the cadre of the teaching staff has employed many different iterations and combinations of teaching approaches and methods that have been loosely categorized as belonging to the more general domains of asynchronous learning (online learning?), synchronous learning (real-time learning), or a combination of the two (blended learning), and in some cases, were actually being implemented side by side, where all participants could opt to make use of whichever framework best suited them. The following passages are one instructor's reflections and realizations as the twists and turns unfolded.

It cannot be denied that there are some inherent advantages to a select few features of the online learning process. To take just one example, the daily commute into school has undoubtedly become more pleasant with only teaching staff making use of the physical facilities of the campus. The driving time can potentially be much shorter. Furthermore, the procedures for recordkeeping can be greatly simplified. The physical space that is necessary to keep semester after semester of examination packs can become truly overwhelming. Conversely, any kind of information that can be formatted into a readable or viewable document can be created and uploaded, so that all may be accessible to any student who wishes to expand their personal knowledge on a particular concept or activity. Another point in favor is the relative ease in which the outside world can be brought inside the classroom to individualize the content of a given college credit course to the degree that it may be done when learning online is almost unlimited. Finally, from the standpoint of efficiency, online learning can greatly reduce the need to designate physical space or non-renewable resources, such as copying paper, and given all of the challenges our global community faces on these fronts, may become less and less optional.



"Real-time learning more easily allows the teacher to match up a given name with a given face, and potentially make closer connections to those students."

On the other hand, real time learning also has some solid advantages. To take just one example, the entire process of reading the room, and making mental note of whether your students understand or follow what you are teaching, is far more straightforward when all of the students for which you are given responsibility are assembled in the same place, sitting within your eyesight. Another point in favor of real time learning is that it is all too easy for a student that may be withdrawn, or is having issues in class, but does not wish to go over them, can more naturally approach the teacher (or the reverse) in the physical process of coming, and coming on time. Also, real-time learning more easily allows the teacher to match up a given name with a given face, and potentially make closer connections to those students, which would allow the teachers, in turn, the chance to develop more insights about those for whom they have been assigned responsibility. Another area where real-time learning has a clear advantage is in the realm of assessment. An exam hall with physical invigilators on hand to watch all of the students as they complete their exams will, by their very definition, be more secure than exams that are conducted online.. Finally, if the idea that males and females can, and should, be studying and testing together, the requirement of real-time learning that they be in the same physical classroom or exam hall should take preference over the same students being allowed to test or participate with only members of the same gender.



Is there a happy medium, where some parts of a given course curriculum are left online, while others remain in real-time? To the degree that the students at UTAS Salalah have an opinion, it seems to be that if the course classes or meetings in which they participate are online, then the testing and assessments should also be conducted online. And, the same rule would hold for real-time classes and meetings. If and when all of UTAS's students had equally strong and reliable connections to the Internet, and were able to use devices that would allow them to have the same access to all course materials, then most of the course work, with the real-time requirements for limited resources such as paper, could be transferred online. However, anything that is done in the nature of an oral presentation, where it is necessary to give a kind of speech, as well as most assessments, are too important, in the view of this writer, to consign to a process of signing in, verifying, and preparing to test, to be done online. So, regular course meetings and distribution of materials could be done virtually, but most assessments, and anything involving face-to-face contact, should be done in real time.

In conclusion, it has been the experience of this writer that online learning can certainly enhance the educational process for both teachers and students on some key metrics, but that real time learning is still preferable for those who are the most concerned with results that are both reliable and valid. While it may be too early to draw sweeping conclusions, studies conducted around the world indicate that the time spent, for example, in substituting online learning for real-time learning in elementary schools, students who were already having difficulties fell even further behind over that same time period. This would suggest that at least some students need to have the physical presence and connections with their teachers that real-time learning has to offer. It is my fervent wish that the human element of education never be lost, and that the pursuit of a higher education never be relegated to the same level of importance as a computer game or entertainment video.

"Is there a happy medium, where some parts of a given course curriculum are left online, while others remain in real-time?"

WELCOME ABOARD!



ANFAL AL SHANFARI

GFP Lecturer

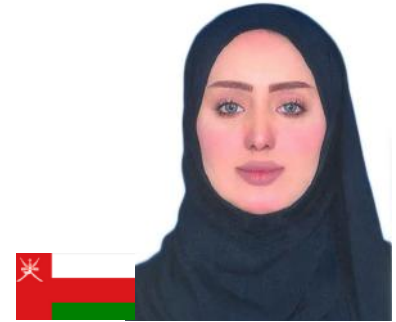
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ADAPTABILITY

in the New Learning Contexts

by Musallam Said Al Mahri



Photo from www.sct.edu.om

My first lecture at Salalah College of Technology (SCT) was an unforgettable experience. I learned that a teacher should not judge his/her students based on an image he/she formed prior to real interaction with the students.

It was a grammar class for Level 2 students. I explained the grammar aspect very well by giving examples and asking students to form relevant structures. Then, I asked the students to answer an exercise after modeling the first two items with the class. While I was walking around to monitor the work, I noticed that one of the students was not doing the exercise. I stood close to him and said: "Why did not you do the exercise?" He stared at me and shouted "I do not have a pen. How can I write?" I did not

like the way he talked to me, so I asked him to leave the class immediately. Later on, I realized that I made a wrong decision since I set high expectations by comparing the students at SCT with Sultan Qaboos University students.

I discovered that my students were different, that I should accept their culture and I need to be more flexible and tolerant. I also learned that some aspects of students' behavior should be overlooked in some cases. The main responsibility of a teacher is to guide students and help them follow the right track. Although changing students' habits and beliefs takes much time and effort, I believe that a teacher can convince his/her students of their mistakes and make them feel how important it is to accept the change whenever it is required.

PHILOSOPHY CORNER

by Dr. Marc Carmichael Brown

"Meh"

In this edition of the *Philosophy Corner* we take a look at the philosopher Mediocrates.

Mediocrates was student of Diogenes and assistant in the sabotage of Plato's lectures. Much like his mentor, Mediocrates was critical of Plato's interpretation of Socrates, made a virtue of poverty and mocked Alexander the Great in public and to his face. However, unlike Diogenes he was never captured by pirates, and much of his work is existent.

In the next edition of the *Philosophy Corner*, more deeply moving and profound quotes from our resident Stoic Philosopher Mediocrates.

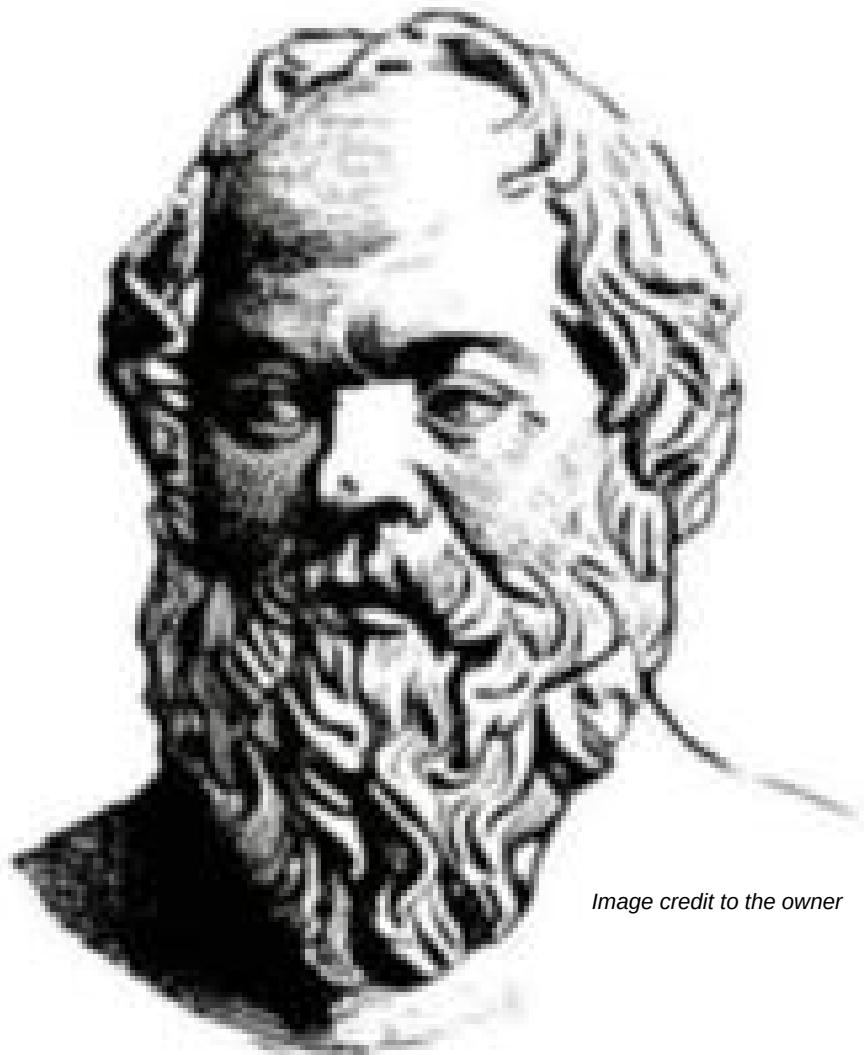


Image credit to the owner

- Mediocrates



Working in an Office vs Working from Home

by Ghaida Al Wahaibi, Level 3 / Group 5

Some individuals think that working from home is better than working in an office, while others prefer it the other way around. In this essay, I am going to compare and contrast these two methods of working and state which one I prefer.

There are many similarities between working from home and working in an office DOES. First, working from home increases work productivity as well as working in an office. Second, working from home increases workers' skills and so does working in an office. Finally, working from home gives an opportunity to get to know others like working in an office.

On the other hand, there are some differences between the two methods of working. First, working in an office is more efficient, but working from home is boring sometimes. Second, working from home saves time and provides convenience. Finally, working from home brings us closer to the family, unlike working in an office, where during working hours we are in the work place.

In conclusion, there are many ways to compare and contrast working from home and working from the office. This is evident from what I mentioned above. In my opinion, I prefer working from the office because it has many advantages offered in the workplace.



Photo credit to the owners



Is Tourism Good?

by Mohammed Bait Almdawi, Level 4 / Group 7

Tourism is considered an important industrial benefit for countries around the world. An estimate of eight trillion people travel annually which brings huge benefits to the economy. Undeniably, some people consider tourism good, while others think that it harms the world. In this essay, I will examine both the advantages and disadvantages of tourism and provide my opinion.

Firstly, let us look into the advantages of tourism. One of the direct benefits of tourism for a country is the undeniable growth in jobs, and the number of business

opportunities that open up for the local people. The economy of many countries will sharply increase when there is a huge number of foreign and local tourists who spend money for leisure or nature.

On the other hand, tourism has also disadvantages. The rate of pollution is likely to increase due to the number of tourists. For instance, if three out of the ten tourists smoke, air pollution will sharply increase, thereby affecting those with preexisting respiratory issues. Another example is environmental pollution

when tourists just throw their rubbish elsewhere, due to lack of awareness on proper waste disposal.

Having analyzed both views, I am with the people who believe that tourism is good because it helps to boost the economy. One good example is Salalah, known for its Khareef season. As you can see now, the city has become modernized because of the revenue from tourism. Dhofari people have been given job opportunities to cater to the growing demands of tourists.

DO CITIES PROVIDE BENEFITS OR CAUSE PROBLEMS?

by Sharifa Al-Janfali, Level 4 / Group 10

It is claimed that cities provide people with benefits, but they also cause problems. Hence, I will explore this statement and state why I agree with it.

First of all, let us examine how cities are beneficial for people. There are many companies and factories in the city; that is why people have better job opportunities and higher salaries. Public transportation is also more accessible in the city. People from the city have greater chances of experiencing big events and activities such as concerts and expositions.

Next, let us consider how cities can cause problems for people. Overpopulation and pollution can become issues. Too many people in the city means higher consumption of different forms of energy. Smoke from cars and factories pollutes the air. All of these factors contribute to climate change.

In conclusion, I do agree that cities provide pros and cons to people's lives. Since I dream to be a manager of a big company, I wish to live and work in Muscat or Salalah.



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PHRASEOLOGY

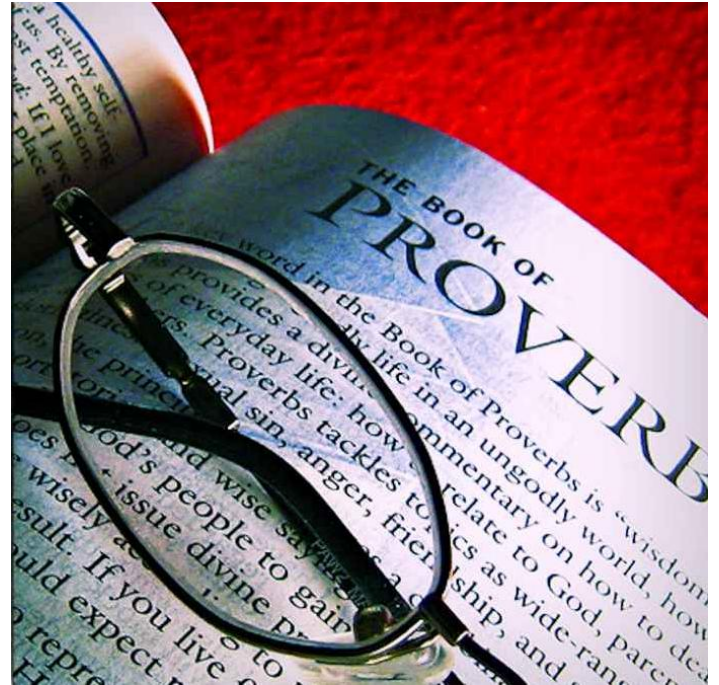
by Dr. Marc Carmichael Brown

There is a common misunderstanding of the terms, phrase and proverb. Applied as a noun, a proverb is indeed a phrase, the difference being the phrase alone is a commonly used expression either in spoken or written language, whereas a proverb expresses a truth which may be applied to common situations.

When considered as a verb form, a proverb is merely to speak or to write a proverb, but the phrase refers to the performance of a passage of music.

A bad penny always turns up (Men may lykne letterid men... to a badde peny.)

In the modern lexicon, this proverb relates to a person of low or ill repute, the 'prodigal son' for example. However, traditionally, this proverb was used to describe an undesirable event.



First recorded in Langland's famous 14th century work *Pier's Plowman*, the term was used to refer to coins which were considered bad as in, counterfeited or 'clipped'. Clipping of coins was a common practice at the time, which debased the coins before standardization was enforced or enforceable.

There is no clear link between a bad, or debased penny and the notion that the term refers to something undesirable. There is a school of thought that considers the proverb 'what goes around comes around' to be in some way associative to the extent that by passing along a bad penny, it will not be long before it comes back again.



Quality Assurance Matters

by Salina Mascrelhas



Quality is a vital part of the University's mission and it is the responsibility of all stakeholders; in view of this, there is a Quality Assurance Department (QAD) at the University Level and each unit has a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

The ELC QAC is a committed team, working in collaboration with the QAD to achieve the goals of the Institution. The English Language Center (ELC) strives to excel in its goal achievements each successive year, and is proud of its attainments.

In pursuance of the 'Job Rotation' policy, and to ensure continuous Staff Professional Development, three new members were inducted into the committee for this academic year. They are: Mr. Ahmed Al Maashani-Afternoon Shift In-charge, Mrs. We'am Al Jilani and Dr. Razia Khan. Mrs. Shalu Thomas, an experienced team member, Mrs. Salina Mascrelhas the Coordinator and Mr. Saeed Al Mashiki- Chairman of ELC QAC. In spite of the pandemic, with blended learning and 50% in-person attendance of students and staff, the dedicated QAC members have successfully completed all the planned

activities. This has been achieved with the help of all stakeholders such as Level Coordinators and Committee Coordinators. A special word of thanks to our Heads of Sections (HOSs): The HOS ELP (English Language Program), Mr. Salim Al Maashani for inspiring us to keep striving for better outcomes and Ms. Khayar Al Amri, the HOS C&TM (Curriculum and Teaching Methods) for encouraging and enabling us to conduct the required surveys for both students and staff. It would also be remiss on our part not to recognize the contribution made by Mr. Antony Jawahar, the E-Learning Coordinator to the online survey process. But most of all we would like to thank the Group Tutors/ Lecturers, both at the Foundation (FP) and the Post Foundation (PF) Levels, who faced tremendous unprecedented challenges but patiently encouraged record student participation in all the surveys conducted.

As mentioned earlier, to reach the pinnacle of achievement in the Institutional Goals, all stakeholders are equally responsible for the quality of services provided. Let us work together as one team to achieve our mission and provide life-long learning opportunities for our graduates.

Research and Innovation: Step Forward Towards Oman Vision 2040

by Dr. Rais Attamimi

The last calendar year was an auspicious one for all of those in the larger communities of higher education sector in the Sultanate of Oman. In August of the year 2021, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation (MoHERI) announced the establishment of the Oman Research Portal. Stated succinctly, the main goal of the development of the portal is to allow for any individual researcher to submit his or her future proposal initially, and then to monitor and track the progress of the proposal's approval, under a single, integrated framework. In theory, this should also make it easier for these researchers to communicate with individual colleges and institutions of learning who could be responsible for carrying the research projects out, according to Eng. Nasser Ali al-Mandhari, the director of the Oman Research Portal Project within MoHERI. It will also now be easier for college students interested in performing research studies to gain access to possible topics of interest, as well as to see the results of previously completed research projects within the same topic area, key statistics about these projects, and other related data. Some of the individual platforms and research databases that are available through this new online entryway include the Oman Research Repository (Shuaa), Oman Research and Education Network (OMREN), the EJAAD Platform, the National Equipment and Facilities Database (iLab), and Masader (Oman Virtual Science Library).

Entities such as the Taawun Platform, as well as the Research Information Management System (RIMS) can assist in linking researchers to those wishing to pursue research and innovation, as well as to possible government offices that could assist in providing the financing for the research studies that are intended to be carried out. Another example is iLab which allows any individual researcher the power to investigate what kinds of research equipment may exist within the Sultanate of Oman to aid him or her in carrying out their research projects. Efforts have also been made to create additional databases that offer a wide range of services, such as the detection of plagiarism, to maintain a high standard of quality for all research proposals that will eventually be approved, as well as to generate a list of research equipment and tools that have already been purchased, so that the money allocated for future purposes is not being spent on materials that already exist within the inventory of the Omani government.



Photo credit to the owner

This type of online service has come in handy, particularly when juxtaposed against the backdrop of having to go through all of the various complications and delays in real-time research imposed by the COVID-19 coronavirus. According to available statistics, as many as 16,560 researchers and 4,956 arbitrators have enrolled in the system. There have been as many as 57 people who have already obtained material benefits from coordinating their research works through the portal. More than 738 research proposals were submitted through the RIMS system, with more than 400 of those dealing with research conditions pertinent to the COVID-19 virus alone. The number of research projects funded through the portal has reached 1,229. For those who wish to use the portal to investigate currently available research, it features 1,711 publications, 1,374 scientific journals, and 561 research projects. These statistics were provided by Idris Said al-Hasani, a spokesperson for MoHERI.

Moving to the topic of innovation, it was recently announced by the Council of Arab Ministers for Communications and Information that the Omani capital of Muscat was selected as the Arab Digital Capital for the year 2022. This designation will allow for Muscat to host a series of conferences and research initiatives and/or events that showcase the progress made, in particular, by various governmental agencies to improve the overall digital and technological capacities and capabilities of Muscat Governorate. This development was hailed by Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, as a reflection of confidence within the Gulf region that Muscat, and Oman at large, could provide fertile ground for future digital and technological innovations by interested companies and individuals alike under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik.

It was mandatory for each of the cities and countries of this region vying for this designation to submit files of candidacy. Oman's candidate file was entitled, "Digital Future That Generates Opportunities", which nicely dovetails with three of the main axes of the Oman 2040 agenda: cybersecurity, digital innovation and digital capacities development, according to Al Maawali.

Another representative from the Muscat Governorate, Sayyid Saud Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, made the desired connection between other national goals of the 2040 vision, namely, that this will spur on even more individual and group efforts to establish virtual technical systems that will, in turn, lead to future innovations that will further develop skills and strengthen institutional partnerships in the country.

"By hosting the event, Muscat Governorate's Office seeks to make the capital's digital programmes harmonious with the four axes of the Capital's Strategy of Excellence, namely sustainable environment, corporate/institutional governance, economic development and society. The strategy puts the city on track for the incarnation of a desired digital reality that will reflect positively on the daily life of individuals and establishments," said Al Busaidi.


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The Oman News Agency. August 4, 2021. Oman Research Portal Enhances World of Research, Innovation in Oman. Retrieved from: <https://omannews.gov.om/NewsDescription/ArtMID/392/ArticleID/36694/Oman-Research-Portal-Enhances-World-of-Research-Innovation-in-Oman> January 28, 2022.

WISDOM

by Rachel Joseph

A black and white photograph of a woman wearing a dark hijab and a dark long-sleeved top with white embroidery. She is sitting at a desk, looking down at a magazine she is holding. The magazine cover has the word 'BIMWAYS' and 'FOUNDATIONS' visible. In the background, there is a computer monitor, a keyboard, a clock, and a framed picture on the wall. An air conditioner is mounted on the wall above her.

**A discerning mind....
A well-educated heart...
To act effectively...
To correct amenably...
To judge wisely...
To put first things first...
To rise above daily trifles...
To see rightly....
To seek what is worth....
To serve humbly...
To show immense
compassion....
Right now, at this moment....
Let the infinite wisdom fill us
and make us wise and strong.**

THE HAPPIEST BOY IN THE WORLD

by We'am Al Jilani

Salim in Yemen
Is the happiest child in the world!
Every night,
He enjoys continuous fireworks.
Every morning,
He feels glad
Because his school is closed
For an odd reason,
That he does not know!

Fragments are uncountable,
On the floor.
He uses as his toys!
One is a black car,
The second is a blue ball!
However,
When he is done with his playing,
He looks back at his family!

And says,
"In the morning,
You were six,
In the evening,
Why you are four?"
They went to heaven
My little boy.
Just ignore counting,
And enjoys the endless fireworks!

OMAN

2020

by Osman Mohammed

The best successor to the best ancestor, so that the glory of glory
may be established

And it increases the building blocks for renewal and decoration

It extends a long life

He offers his white hands to the youth, let's go to the farmer

Our motto:

With knowledge, the building is complete, and with knowledge,
peoples prevail

The factories of development and creativity gyrate

The minds of scholars and youth are exploding with knowledge

It comes with new and unique knowledge

It promises treasures of knowledge...

Including leadership and innovation

Rejoice, country, blessed by God with the collections of astonishment

From landscapes and a creative people

And a rational, wise leadership that is looking forward to the new

A leadership that understands the homeland is built

by the forearms of its builders

With proper planning, intellect, and a sound opinion

And the wheel of creativity moved, planning for a distant future

Minds competed in science, technology and innovation

She was able to keep up with the year 2040

Automation, nano, and all modern developments

To build a proud homeland in which leadership

is a science and an art

Innovations and output keep pace with what is new

Blessed are you, Oman, and God will guard you

And atone for your mistakes, you are worthy of leadership

And you are an asset to the Arabs, for you a long life

You have sovereignty for eternity, a title for friendships

And relationships with all the world for your love and more

May God bless the people of Oman on the straight path.