

FOREWORD

Since its inception nearly two decades ago, the Language Centre has continued its academic march, maintaining high professional standards and a strong commitment to both progress and excellence. It has remained faithful to its pledge and to its partnership, both with the academic community and to its students, the 'end-users' of its services, in order to meet the ever growing needs of the ELT community. At the same time, the size of the LC operation has witnessed an unparalleled growth at an unprecedented rate and pace.

Throughout, the LC has endorsed measures and pedagogical practices and methodologies that have proved to be most appropriate in meeting the needs of SQU students. The purpose of having the FORUM is central to the overall theme of the vibrant LC, that is conscious of the pressing intellectual needs of the ELT community. For the past seven issues, the publication has moved from strength to strength and enjoyed a larger readership, hence a wider base of contributions and more focused areas of common concerns. The LC pledges to continue its solid commitments and partnership in progress.

On the editing front, Mike Ramsden and his team have managed admirably to cruise through both technical and non-technical difficulties with determination and persistence. However, the Editorial board has had to reconcile itself to the fact that some of its dedicated members are leaving the country.

Robert Fielding, a member of the FORUM who served on the editorial board for the past 3 years had to leave at the end of the Spring semester last year, and Tony Parsons, who has so devotedly served on the editorial board since its formation, is regretfully leaving Oman after 5 fruitful, rewarding dedicated years throughout his association with the LC.

Faryal Ahmed from EES and Elizabeth Ramaniah are carrying on with this formidable task and have joined the editorial team. The team will continue to ensure high standards, and maintain continuity and constant development.

The focus of this issue of the FORUM is on the learner. Much has been said and argued and theorized on effective second language teaching and learning. Some learning theories, though they have fallen into scientific disrepute, are still being used. We need to explore how best to arrive at a better understanding of the learners' perspectives towards ELT. To do that, we need to understand, and build on, students' motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic. We need to harness and support creative and innovative behavior in the learning milieu.

The 3rd annual national ELT conference is all about this specific purpose: the learners' perspective, whose voice and concerns need to be identified loud and clear and adequately addressed.

Mehdi Ahmed Jaaffar, Ph.D.
Editor in chief