

Editor's introduction

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Naomi Matsubara's paper begins this issue with an interesting cultural perspective on Gulf university-age writers, comparing themes in a large collection of short, creative texts written by Emirati and Japanese students. The analysis brings out commonalities in this age group, as well as striking contrasts which may be explained by a combination of traditional culture and modern social factors. Jennifer Ball's paper examines visual processing difficulties which readers of Arabic as a first language may have when reading English. This has practical implications for those teachers in the Gulf region: visual processing difficulties can cause strain and impair understanding, concentration and motivation in all university courses. The paper proposes a simple classroom checklist which can help teachers to notice potential problems in this area.

Cheri MacLeod and Paula Hayden present findings from case studies of two students at a technical education institution in Qatar, to show the learning skills which students use during a typical day of classes. As well as observing the skills required by particular courses, the authors elicited students' perceptions about effective learning skills (e.g. understand and apply concepts to current work; concentrate and maintain focus; follow written instructions; ask questions) and how these can be developed. The paper by Reem Alebaikan looks at how guest speakers can be involved in courses, and the benefits of this. The paper reports on a trial of different methodologies with guest speakers (face-to-face and online) and presents evidence of how students responded to these methods. Julie Nash's paper reflects on the use of a collaborative learning approach for a university course in Saudi Arabia. She presents a variety of assessment evidence and student feedback to evaluate the impact of the course on her students.

We would like to thank the peer reviewers whose feedback on submissions to *LTHE* is essential to the quality of the papers we publish. Reviewers for this issue include Abeer Bar, Ahmad Al-Haqbani, Amani Hamdan, Cindy Gunn, Gail Alhafidh, James Scotland, Jessica Peters, Marion Engin, Mick King, Salim Khan and Tasnim Saleh.

Book reviews in this issue by CJ Davison and Magdalena Karolak take a critical look at *Teaching for quality learning at university* (Biggs & Tang, 2011) and *Undisciplining knowledge: interdisciplinarity in the twentieth century* (Graff, 2015), respectively. As usual in *LTHE*, the reviewers use their perspective as educators in the Gulf region to identify implications and applicability of these works locally, as well as within the context of international scholarship.

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