

KAU Language Club

King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 21589

Language Club Orientation 2013-14 (Fall Term) Final Report

Questionnaire Results

On Wednesday, 11 November 2013, a meeting was held in the ground floor auditorium of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities building. The purpose of this meeting was two-fold: one, inform students with regard to the proposed organizational format of the new KAU Language Club; and two, collect information from students regarding their interest in the formation of, and participation in, the new language club. The attached questionnaire was the method used to collect the information from the students.

The Orientation began at the scheduled time and was conducted in English (Roddy A. Stegemann) with prepared conference interpretation in Arabic (Ahmed Gari). More than 30 students attended. Two faculty members from the English Language Section of the Department of European Languages and Literature were also identified as present. Of the students present 32 filled out the questionnaire at least in part.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections including Personal Data, The Orientation, and Club Interest. Each of the three sections of the questionnaire were thoroughly explained in both English and Arabic. As the questionnaire was not anonymous the results are likely biased.

Personal Data

Under the assumption that most of the students understood what they were doing the following results were obtained. The first year of study represents the first year beyond the foundation year.

Class Level of Those in Attendance

1 st Year	4
2 nd Year	11
3 rd Year	4
Other	9
Total	28

As nine students surely did not understand the question it is difficult to assess the results with any degree of accuracy. It does appear, however, that the majority of those present at the orientation were 2nd year students.

The Orientation

Students were asked to evaluate the orientation based on a scale from 1 (very terrible) to 5 (very good). A rating of 3 (fair) was a measure of indifference. Based on the evaluation provided by 29 students of the total present the overall performance of the orientation was rated above good at 4.3. Three students offered no evaluation.

In answer to the question “**What did you like best?**” a wide variety of answers were received. Most important among these were the organization of the event, the concept of the club, the presentation, and the conference interpretation into Arabic. Other students liked the refreshments, the venue, the energy, and the presence of students from other faculties.

Four students clearly did not understand the question, and 13 students failed to answer it.

In answer to the question “**What did you like worst?**” students complained mostly about the room temperature, the poor attendance, and the shortage of time. In addition, some students were disappointed by the absence of the French language and reliance on the Arabic language. Other students thought that the presentation was too serious and wanted more interaction with the speakers. Still others noted an absence of professors and difficulty with the English language. Finally, one student complained about the time of the event.

Nine students reported no complaint, and 15 students failed to respond to the question. These were the two largest categories of response and non-response.

Suggestions for improving the orientation included the hosting of a lottery, less detail with regard to each slide, the elimination of the Arabic interpretation, complete translation of the slide presentation into Arabic, presentation in both French and English, and finally, a different venue.

Eighteen students failed to answer the question. Six students responded that they had no suggestions for improvement. Four students failed to understand the question.

Club Interest

On the questionnaire students were asked to express their level of interest in the club as well as their interest in the various activities and tasks proposed to them at the orientation.

LEVEL OF INTEREST

The level of interest was expressed by the students desire to head the club, become a member or head of an activity committee, take responsibility for a task, or simply participate in the

KAU Language Club
King Abdulaziz University
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 21589

club's events. Students were allowed to check as many of these items as they wished. The results are summarized below.

NATURE OF PARTICIPATION	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	PERCENT OF THOSE IN ATTENDANCE
Executive Council	8	25%
Activity Committee	15	47%
Task Committee	8	25%
General Participation	20	63%

ACTIVITIES

In addition students were asked to list the proposed activities in which they were interested in order of preference. Respondents were permitted to propose activities not listed on the flier or presented at the orientation. These activities were then encoded and student interested counted by activity and order of preference.

Eighteen students provided their first priority, and 13 students provided both their second and third priorities. The greatest amount of interest was shown in field trips and theatre. These were the two activities discussed during the orientation. Conversation was a third activity in which students showed particular interest followed by outings and sports.

Activity	Code	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
Theatre	1	5	1	2	8
Field Trips	2	3	4	5	12
Outings	3	2	0	2	4
Sports	4	1	3	0	4
Conversation	5	4	2	0	6
Videos and Music	6	0	2	1	3
Seminar/Workshop	7	1	1	1	3
Lectures	8	0	0	1	1
Mock Interview	9	1	0	0	1
Language Contests	10	1	0	1	2
		18	13	13	44

Outstanding among students **first priorities** were *theatre* and *conversation*. *Field trips* and *outings* were somewhat preferred, but no preference was shown for either *videos and music* or *lectures*.

With regard to **overall preference** *field trips* were rated number one followed by *theatre* and *conversation*. Some preference was given to *outings*, *sports*, *seminars*, and *videos and music*. Among the **least preferred** activities were *language contests*, *mock interviews*, and *lectures*. It

should be noted that the *mock interview* was a student suggestion not provided either on the flier or at the orientation. As a result, it was not a candidate activity from which the other students could choose.

TASK COMMITTEES

Less interest was shown in the **tasks**, but this was to be expected, as tasks included a level of participation above that of general participation. Moreover, less time was devoted to tasks during the presentation, and students had no exposure to the suggested tasks before the orientation.

The tasks in which students were most interested included *advertising* for the club and the creation and maintenance of a club *website*. Some interest was also shown in the maintenance of a club *library*, the creation of a *club newsletter*, and *membership recruitment*. Less interest was shown in maintaining the club store (*accounting*) and a club room *photo album*.

Tasks	Code	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
Advertising	1	3	0	1	4
Membership	2	0	2	0	2
Library	3	0	2	1	3
Newsletter	4	0	0	2	2
Website	5	3	1	0	4
Accounting	6	0	1	0	1
Photo Album	7	1	0	0	1
	Total	7	6	4	17

Event Preparation

AUTHORIZATION

In order to initiate the event several formal letters of request were written in English by the club coordinator. The first letter requested permission for the event, a special venue that required the dean's signature, and refreshments. Along with the letter was provided an outline of the purpose and nature of the proposed meeting. As the proposed date was rejected due to an apparent schedule conflict, a second letter was written in which a new date was proposed. Although approval was eventually obtained and preparation begun, it was soon discovered that the proposed date conflicted with a religious holiday that required fasting. As the refreshments were an integral part of the event, a third letter was written that would have pushed the date of the event one week further out, but the request was denied.

Because we did not know with certainty when the event would take place until two weeks before the scheduled date, there was little time to arrange for the advertisements of the event.

ADVERTISING

Of the approximately 480 students enrolled in the Department of European Languages and Literature, including both the French and English sections, only 32 students attended the orientation with certainty – roughly *six percent*. Several of the students in attendance came from other departments and faculties. We had hoped to bring in approximately 20% of the entire department student body and prepared accordingly.

The **strategy for advertising** the orientation meeting was **four-pronged** in nature including *electronic displays, wall posters, pull-ups, and fliers*. In addition, pre-presentation refreshments were also planned as both a lure to attract students and as a means to gather them in a timely manner.

With respect to **electronic advertising** we managed to create and obtain three alternating slides in the display screen across from the elevator in the French section on the 4th floor of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities building. Each slide announced the orientation in a different language. The first of these three slides was posted two weeks before the event; the other two were posted several days later. This form of advertisement surely failed to reach the vast majority of English language students who rarely come to the fourth floor, but for brief visits about administrative matters. On the other hand, it was likely seen by all students of the French section – somewhat over 30 students.

In addition, we were also able to obtain a very **brief, university-wide, announcement** on the university's homepage. This announcement was in Arabic and provided the name of the event, as well as its time and location. No details with regard to the nature of the event were provided, however. When this announcement was posted is not clearly known, but based on input obtained from the Vice Dean's office it went up only two or three days before the event.

The **54 posters** that were to be hung in the nine different university buildings where students from the Department of European Languages and Literature attend classes were never obtained. The reason for this is that permission to have them printed was not received until the day before the event. Two posters – one in Arabic and one in French and English – were to be hung at the estimated three doorways for each building. The request for these posters was made as soon as the time and location of the event had been properly authorized -- approximately two weeks before the event took place.

Only two of the **four pull-ups** requested were obtained. These, like all of the other forms of advertising media were ordered approximately two-weeks in advance of the event. As permission to have them made was only obtained on the day before the event, only two were ordered and only for the purpose of advertising the location of the event in the building where it would take place -- not the event itself. The Arabic pull-up was placed in front of the student lounge

where the food was laid out, and the English and French pull-up was placed in front of the auditorium where the event would take place. In this way, students would know that they were at the right place without having to ask.

Five hundred fliers were printed – one for each student of the department, plus twenty more to be laid out in the club room. Unlike the posters that were more costly, the fliers did not require public display and could be distributed among the department's student body. The fliers, like the other forms of media, were requested approximately two weeks before the event took place.

As the event was rapidly approaching and still no permission had been obtained, the club coordinator took it upon himself to have the fliers printed independently of the university.

The flier was two-side with French and English on one side and Arabic on the other. Whereas the French and English side advertised only the name, location, and time of the event, the Arabic side explained the event in more detail, thus making the event attractive to those with even very low French or English language competence. In order to reduce costs only the French and English side was printed in color.

The distribution of the fliers was organized into four teams consisting of seven students. Each team leader was given a page of instructions that was thoroughly explained in a separate, personal interview. Only one of the team leaders provided the feedback requested on the instruction sheet. As the others did not, it is impossible to know how many of the fliers were actually distributed and to whom.

Eighty-four sections from a much larger number of sections obtained from room scheduling could be clearly identified by course number, location, and time. For the reason given above it is impossible to know how many of these sections were actually reached, and if reached, in what manner, and by whom.

All fliers that were presumably distributed at least two days in advance of the event.

In **summary**, the actual level of advertising was far less than intended and much too late. As different students respond to different forms of commercial stimulation with different time frames, many different forms of advertisement were proposed. Unfortunately, the single most important form of *actualized* advertisement – namely, flier distribution – was poorly carried out – and this, despite significant effort to make sure that it would succeed. Even if it had been carried out as planned, it was the most personal prong of the four different types of advertisement and thus likely dissuaded as many students as it persuaded.

REFRESHMENTS

Like the posters and pull-ups, permission to obtain the refreshments was given only one day before the event – this, despite their having been requested in the event’s original proposal many weeks before the event actually took place.

As it turned out the refreshments arrived ten minutes late. More important is the fact that ninety percent of the students present in the student lounge were fasting and did not partake in the food and drink while waiting for the presentation to begin. Indeed, my request to postpone the event by one week in order to avoid the awkwardness of this situation had been denied.

The vast majority of the food and drink was given to the building maintenance staff when it became clear that the students were not partaking, but not until after the presentation had begun.

Selection of the Executive Council and Other Matters

FACULTY SELECTION COMMITTEE

Two letters were composed inviting faculty members of the English and French Sections to participate in the selection of the club’s Executive Council.

One letter was written in English, and one was written in French. The French version was proofread and corrected by a faculty member of the French Section before distribution. The English letter was posted in the mailbox of each member of the English language faculty, and the French letter was posted in the mailbox of each member of the French language faculty. Similarly, each letter was placed in an envelope and slipped under the door of each faculty member in each section. In those cases where more than one faculty member occupied the same office additional letters were provided.

With each cover letter was provided a request for information regarding the faculty member’s personal contact information and his availability for student interviews. Faculty members were asked to deliver their contact information and availability to the Language Club.

The cover letter provided a brief explanation of the orientation, the purpose of the Executive Council, and the need for the formation of the selection committee

The number of faculty showing an interest in the selection of the club’s Executive Council was one.

SELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

An email was sent to each of eight students who had expressed an interest in becoming a member of the club’s Executive Council on the questionnaire passed out at the orientation. An

SMS telling that an email had been sent was then sent to each student. Both the email and the SMS were sent several weeks after the Orientation. In the SMS the name and title of the Club Coordinator were provided, so that everyone would know the source of the message. The email and the SMS were composed in English. This was likely an error, because it was later discovered that one of the students who volunteered to be interviewed was a French major.

Of the 8 students contacted only two responded.

As a result, another email was sent out in English, but this time to all students who had filled out the questionnaire and provided an active email account. In order to avoid confusion this email was not sent to those who had shown an interest in the Executive Council on the questionnaire. One additional student with an interest in the Executive Council was found.

Each of the three students who confirmed an interest in the Executive Council were sent both an email and SMS announcing the time of his interview. Only one student appeared. During the interview the student was questioned about his ability to meet the criteria for membership on the Executive Council outlined during the Orientation. As he had neither attended the Orientation, nor viewed the video of the Orientation that was obtained afterward, he came unprepared.

The interview lasted for more than thirty minutes. One faculty member was present for a portion of the interview in addition to the language club coordinator who was present for the entire interview.

INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

One week before the Orientation took place a request for a **club email address** was formally requested in writing. The email address was not received until three weeks after the event took place.

Reasons for the aforementioned delay included the filling out of the wrong form by Department Staff, the provision of an email address that could not be easily recognized as the club's email address, and an eventual visit to the university's office of Internet Technology to sort things out. This delay may have dissuaded some of the students who were interested in joining the Executive Council from participating in the interview process.

In preparation for the Orientation **Adobe software** was requested in the faculty's IT Department. None was provided. An trip to the university's IT Department did manage, however, to obtain for the club copies of *Adobe Photoshop*, *Adobe Illustrator*, and *Adobe Acrobat Pro*. All three of these were used in preparation for the orientation. Once the club's email address was obtained each software packaged was properly registered with Adobe Software Inc. The KAU Language Club now has its own Adobe account.

A **separate account** for the language club was set up on the Language Club Coordinator's desktop computer in the Language Club room for eventual use by the Executive Council. This account has access to the newly installed Adobe Software as well as an Outlook Express address book with all of the students' names and contact information provided on the completed questionnaires.

EXPENSES

An **EXCEL spreadsheet** has been created to manage the Club's expenses. The current sheet contains a list of all expenses related to the fall term of the 2013-2014 academic year. With the exception of water procurement all receipts for these expenses have been properly stored and are available for review. The total amount including the cost of 500 fliers and water procurement for the fall term 2013-14 is **SAR 1,176.70**. This amount does not include the cost of the two pull-ups and refreshments obtained for the day of the Orientation, as these costs were covered by the office of the dean.

Recommendations

- As only one of the six-, possibly seven-member Executive Council was selected, it is highly recommended that another orientation be given early in the spring term of 2013-14. As all of the preparatory work has been completed once, hosting another orientation would require little effort to ready again.
- A club event should be planned before the spring orientation and executed shortly thereafter in order to retain the interest of those who attend the event.
- The KAU Language Club should not be the sole property of the Department of European Languages and Literatures; nor should it be the sole property of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. One member of the Executive Council should be selected from outside of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities.
- In order to encourage students to take responsibility for their own club it is highly recommended that the new language club coordinator not be housed in the language club itself.
- The desk, cabinets, computer, and printer that were used by the language club coordinator as his office should be turned over to the language club Executive Council once it has been properly selected. Until then it should be made the property of Mazen Hamady Al Yobi for the purpose of organizing the club under new leadership.
- Although some and significant effort on the part of faculty, staff, and administration were provided, much better and more timely support could be provided until the club has gotten off its feet.
- With such little support from the faculty and only partial support from the administration I strongly recommend that a new language club coordinator be found.