



'Getting to know you more' Featuring ... *Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rushita Ismail*

Interview prepared and conducted by Rasaya Marimuthu on behalf of eLingua

eLingua: *Could you kindly provide some details of yourself? Maybe a bit of your biodata, your involvement before working at UiTM, and also your work philosophy.*

Dr. Rushita: Thank you Mr. Rasaya. I was born in Jelutong, Penang, to a beautiful couple of seven children and a year later came my brother. I went to Convent Butterworth primary and secondary schools in Butterworth. When I was offered to do TESOL in the USA after SPM, then I thought this is it. Teaching is my line then. Upon returning home I was posted to a school in my hometown, Balik Pulau. My first of three children was two years old at that time and he had the experience of growing up in a kampong environment before we moved to Selangor. It was a delightful teaching experience for me at those schools in both states as I could see the differences between the urban and rural schools in issues regarding class management and parents' involvement. Students, whoever and wherever they are, need the attention that could be given to them. I believe that when we have the chance to get connected with them, we should embrace the moments and make the most of them.

eLingua: *And now a bit of your workplace at UiTM. How long have you worked here? How was working life at this campus?*

Dr. Rushita: I learned about the existence of UiTM Penang in Permatang Pasir in 1999 and two years later, I reported duty there. Working life tends to be more pleasurable as I found students were more mature and disciplined. Classes were held in old school buildings down the hill and my office was a common shared room with seven other lecturers on the third floor. I could still recall the fifty-six steps stairs that we had to drag ourselves to ascend more than once every day. I did not feel much difference in the teaching environment as in the school that I was in before. In 2003 after the current campus was officiated, we moved here and with degree students registered, only then did I feel like teaching in tertiary education. I enjoyed every minute of teaching life more than before.

Twenty-one graceful years in UiTM have improved me a lot and I am thankful for that. I had been the better version of myself with different roles as an educator, researcher, counselor, consultant, role model, and community member. During my tenure as the Head of the APB from the year 2004 to 2008 and from 2010 to 2014, I had the opportunity to meet other proactive lecturers from the different branch campuses. Most of them have already retired and are still engaged in productive activities such as voluntary teaching and social work which I am considering to engage in too.

eLingua: *What were your memorable moments at the UiTM campus? Specific incidents that you will remember for the rest of your life.*

Dr. Rushita: I had countless memorable moments at the UiTM campus and they are mostly good ones. One of them was my meeting with our dear, the late former Pro-Chancellor Tan Sri Abdul Rahman, who was here on the campus at our 81st UiTM convocation session. At lunch break, I walked to him and dared to jolt his memory of his visit in 1984 to Ames, Iowa attending a convention organised by the Malaysian Student Society of North America. He was among the prominent keynote speakers at the annual convention attended by four hundred students from all over the states. In his speech, he encouraged us to excel academically in our studies and compete internationally with other nationalities in making Malaysia a proud nation.

During a photo session at the Main Hall on campus after that convocation session, I was flattered when Tan Sri instructed the cameraman to take a picture of only the two of us. I felt honoured to be in a photo with someone I had admired very much since I was in college. Al-Fatihah to Tan Sri.

eLingua: *What are your plans for the future, considering the fact that you will be retiring soon? Perhaps pursuing other academic goals, or?*

Dr. Rushita: I will be retiring on 28th June 2022 and I have a long bucket list that I have always wanted to do more. For an exciting and rewarding retirement, I should be taking better care of my health. I intend to attend classes on healthcare to understand my body better. A morning walk is a must and I will make sure to do it every day. As I am a language person, I wish to graduate from the Duolingo apps on my learning of Arabic and German. Time of interactions with the other learners will be more as it would at least help me with the languages and give me the chance to use the languages that I have learned. At the same time, I can visit my friends who live in other parts of the world. Once it is safe to travel I will travel to Europe with my friends and fulfil the wish of the University of Iowa alumnae to visit the nostalgic places to us and explore more places in the states.

I also intend to keep on contributing to the society by doing volunteering work in the community in my residential area. There are education programs that require people to teach courses, like a one day workshops on language learning and baking which I am volunteering. With the more time that I have, the possibilities to be involved in the mosque activities are limitless.

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eLingua: *What do you think and hope for UiTM to be in the next five years? What about your wishes for our own department – APB?*

Dr. Rushita: I am sure that in the next five years, APB Penang will have our own students enrol in the Applied Language studies program just like any other UiTM branch campus. With the increasing number of lecturers with PhDs, we definitely will be able to start teaching courses pertaining to language learning. After many years of taking the role of servicing academy, it is about time we have our own students and be a faculty of our own. Later, we may even have international students on campus and our students can interact with foreign nationalities as well. I always feel that our students need the exposure to different cultures and, at the same time, polish their English and the other languages that they have learned.

eLingua: *What would be your parting advice to the younger lecturers of our department?*

Dr. Rushita: To the young lecturers in APB, strive hard for your goals in teaching students in UiTM. One of them would be to remember that every student is unique and is more important than the subject we teach. Though they are in tertiary education, they need to be nurtured, encouraged, and accepted. It is part of our profession to assist these young people achieve their potential to reveal and find their best selves. I guess we have to keep up with this most challenging part of being a teaching staff.

eLingua: *One last question: any advice, hope, comments, or suggestions for the improvement of our own department? You may also want to offer your thanks and appreciation to them.*

Dr. Rushita: We have been among the best departments on our campus for many years and kudos to Dr. Rofiza Aboo Bakar and the APB staff. We have accomplished a lot, with many awards attained every year. Our department has successfully achieved many with the number of research grants attained and MOUs projects signed. We are to keep up with the progress, and it is hoped that there will be more accomplishments as these in the near future.

I am immensely grateful to everyone on campus, especially the staff in the APB department. We have successfully done some fantastic work together for decades and what we have achieved has been the contribution of everyone in APB and the support of the top management in UiTM CPP. We made it through every time with the collaboration and continuous support that we received from the hard work of everyone in APB. I would also like to extend my gratitude to our Rector and our Head of Studies for their words of encouragement upon my interview for the post of Associate Professor last year. Those words have given me the confidence to believe in myself and attained that last goal in my career.

Moving to a new chapter in life is exciting but I will definitely miss everyone. Working with everyone has been a pleasure. I shall miss the fun department meetings, great lunches and campus gossips. I am thankful to have known everyone and I shall cherish the time that we have spent together here in UiTM. Let's stay in touch.



I will miss this favourite work area of mine, ... and the morning view from my office window



One memorable photo shoot with the late Tan Sri Pro-Chancellor

After one convo session at Dewan Besar

A Report Writing class photo before Covid 19 crisis

Hope to catch up with travelling again