

Academy of Language Studies
UiTM Cawangan Pulau Pinang

e-Lingua

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*Connecting Cultures
One Word at a Time*

你好

Apa Khabar?

Bonjour

Hello

مرحبًا

Hallo

こんにちは

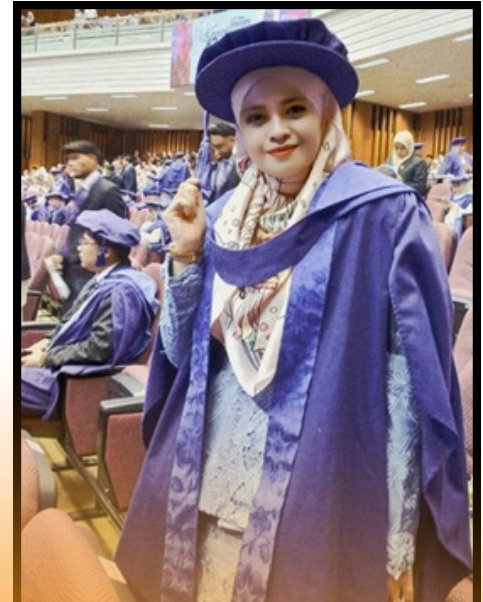


When no one is watching: Quiet lessons from my PhD journey

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When I started my PhD, I was given study leave. At first, it seemed ideal, but in reality, it was a privilege that brought its own quiet pressure. Without set hours or a time clock, I had to learn to manage myself. I soon found that freedom wasn't as easy as it sounded. It took discipline, routines, and regular reminders that this wasn't a break. Over time, I realised a PhD isn't a pause from life, but a serious commitment that tests your responsibility when no one is watching.

As the months passed, I realised that progress in a PhD is often quiet and slow. Most days felt routine, and some were unproductive. Motivation didn't always come when I needed it, so I had to rely on persistence instead. What mattered was showing up, opening my work, reading another paper, writing a few lines, and repeating that each day. In the end, being consistent mattered more than short bursts of excitement.



I also became increasingly aware of the trust my sponsors placed in me. The support I received was not just financial. It was a vote of confidence. Knowing that others believed in the value of my studies reminded me that this journey was never mine alone. That awareness kept me careful and honest in my work, not because I was afraid of consequences, but because I wanted to honour that trust. I learned that integrity is built quietly, through everyday choices, especially when no one is around to applaud or correct you.

On a personal level, my PhD journey deepened my spiritual awareness. Sometimes, progress was slow and the results were unclear. In those times, I remembered that seeking knowledge has a moral side. In Islam, learning is linked to sincerity and effort. Knowing that my intentions and actions mattered beyond the university helped me stay grounded, even when the work felt repetitive or tiring.

Somewhere along the way, this journey taught me humility. The more I read, the more I saw how much there is to learn. Each article I worked through showed me how much I still didn't know. Instead of feeling discouraged, I became more open and respectful toward my own work and others'. It also made me more aware of how limitless Allah's knowledge is, and how small my own understanding will always be. That realisation didn't make me feel less; it helped me stay grounded.

Patience became a steady companion throughout the journey. There were long periods of revising, waiting, and rethinking that tested my self-belief. During those times, I often returned to the reminder from the Quran in Surah Hud, verse 115, that Allah does not let the efforts of those who do good go to waste.

وَأَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

(And be patient! Certainly Allah does not discount the reward of the good-doers.)

That promise did not make the journey easier, but it made it bearable. It taught me to continue with humility, trust, and quiet hope.

Looking back, my PhD was less about earning a title and more about learning how to persevere responsibly. It taught me to value discipline over brilliance, sincerity over speed, and effort over outcome. If the journey left me with anything, it is the belief that growth often happens quietly, shaped not by grand achievements but by patience, integrity, and reliance on The Almighty.



Image Source: Personal archives (AI-stylised)

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