

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

A Researcher's Journey

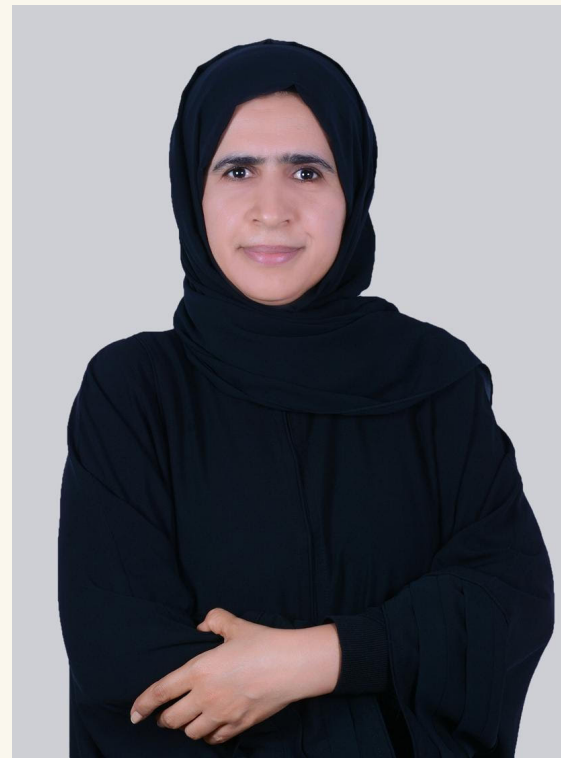
1. How did you become interested in research? What inspired you to pursue research?

I am generally an advocate of constant personal and professional growth. Getting involved in research empowers me as an individual and makes me more aware about my personal and professional life. Research helps one keep an open heart and mind to what is happening around. It is a powerful tool in shaping one's understanding and perspectives about learning, teaching, interacting with students as well as embracing change. Research can lead to more inspirational teaching practices and accommodation of innovations.

2. Can you describe the focus or area of your research? What are your primary research interests?

I am mainly keen on exploring writing. During my teaching I have noticed how learners struggle with writing quality essays and reports. Their difficulties range from crafting arguments, maintaining coherence, and utilizing world knowledge to adhere to writing regulations.

I have also started exploring inclusion in higher education due to its relevance to the CPS and SQU context and my previous experience of teaching visually impaired students, an experience that has inspired me to take part in researching inclusion and developing implications for practitioners in classroom setting.



Dr. Jamila Al Siyabi

Dr. Jamila Al Siyabi has an MA in Applied Linguistics from Queensland University, Australia, a MSc in Educational Research from Exeter University, UK and a PhD in Education from Exeter University, UK on cohesion and coherence in EFL academic writing. She has acquired the LTHE Qualification (Learning and Teaching in The Higher Education Accredited by Higher Education Academy), University of Exeter, UK, 2016.

Her main research interests include writing, communication, culture autonomy and inclusion. She is the author and co-author of a number of publications, and she regularly presents insights on her research and teaching practice at local and internal conferences.

She is also a peer reviewer at Oman's Research Council (TRC) in Oman, and is currently working as an external examiner for the general foundation program for two private colleges in Oman.

She received SQU's best researcher award twice (in 2013 and 2022), and was also awarded by the Omani Embassy in the UK in 2019 for her academic achievements.

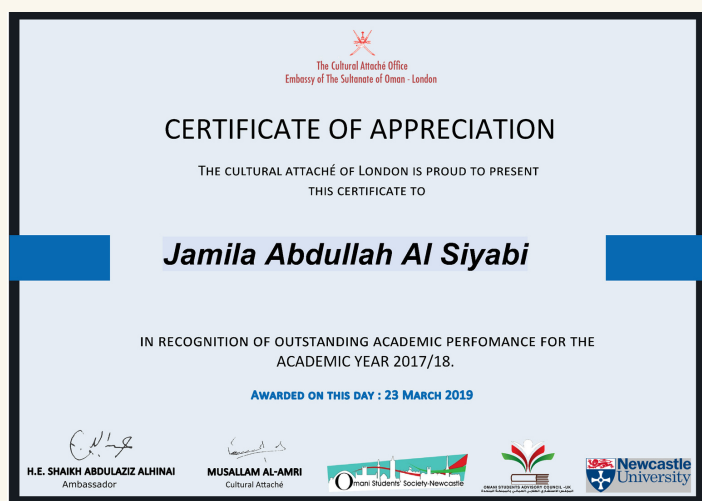


Best researcher award certificate, awarded on SQU day, 2022

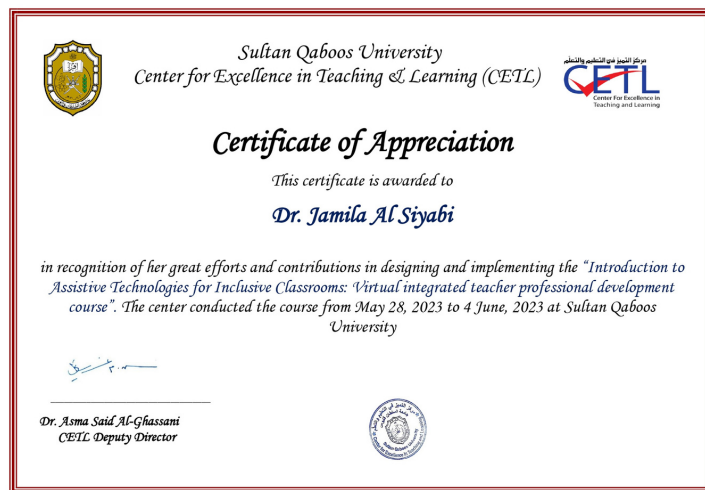
3. What was the initial question or problem that led you to embark on your research journey?

I like to explore and reflect on the type of challenges that students have in their journey of learning English. As English is a foreign language for Omani students, there are linguistic, cultural and psychological barriers that can hinder their success of learning the language. A major area of difficulty is EFL writing, which has always intrigued me. I, therefore, have attempted to explore the area of writing to help students as well as teachers in writing classes. Students need to be aware of the significance of writing, its relevance to the real world and how they can navigate their learning for the purpose of becoming successful writers. It is significant that students understand how their previous experiences with English and Arabic writing can impact their experiences with EFL writing and how they perceive EFL writing.

Another area of research that I have embarked on is inclusion. I have started to become interested in inclusion as a philosophy of learning where all types of learners' needs are considered and accommodated in the process of learning and teaching. According to this paradigm, inclusion is perceived as a human right that advocates addressing learners' physical, psychological, cultural and educational barriers to learning in order to ensure equal opportunities and access to learning. The research that I have taken part in looks into the context of inclusion in higher education institutions in Oman and explores the inclusion experiences of the decision makers, administrative staff, teachers and students in higher education institutions. Their perspectives and practices can help inform more effective inclusive practices and can provide relevant implications for practitioners and researchers.



Certificate of appreciation for academic achievements awarded by the Omani Embassy in the UK in 2019.



Certificate of appreciation from CETL for designing and implementing a professional development course, 2023.

4. What are the biggest challenges you've faced in your research journey, and how did you overcome them?

Balancing time between teaching, research and personal life is not easy. There is always a long to-do list. Time management, setting deadlines, being flexible and keeping optimistic can help navigate through the different tasks on the list. Maintaining a reflective practice, being gentle with oneself and others and looking at the big picture can help us see the relevance of research and how it can shape our teaching, learning and the workplace environment.

5. How do you stay updated on the latest developments and trends in your field?

I try to grab every opportunity to develop professionally. I attend sessions that explore topics that are of interest to me. I read about relevant areas that can inform my future research journey and communicate formally and informally with researchers and practitioners who are involved in research and innovation. I also join programmes that offer training on how to teach more creatively and effectively, and help learners become more critical, autonomous and passionate about their learning.

" Researchers and practitioners need to keep abreast of the evolving nature of education and how technologies can shape access to knowledge and avenues of learning."

6. What do you see as the future of your research field, and how do you hope to contribute to it?

I think there will be more studies that focus on innovation, active learning, critical thinking, communication and collaboration. Researchers and practitioners need to keep abreast of the evolving nature of education and how technologies can shape access to knowledge and avenues of learning. I hope that I can play a part in exploring how learners navigate changes that take place in the world, which can influence their learning practice inside and outside class.



Certificate of appreciation for peer reviewing the Research Grant Proposals submitted to the MoHERI under Call 2022 of the Block Funding Program

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Accepted paper Al Siyabi, J., Tuzlukova, V., Al Kaabi, K., & Almaawali, A. Established practices, challenges and achievements in creating inclusive English language Classrooms in Oman's Institutions of Higher Education. The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes.

Accepted conference proceedings paper 'Blended teacher training course on innovative technologies in higher education inclusive classroom: Experiences, challenges and value' by Tuzlukova, V, Al Siyabi, J. Al-Kaabi, K., Hadra, M, Al-Ghassani, A based on data analysis to be published at The Fifth Regional Conference of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education - 2023, 5-7 December 2023, Oman

Al Siyabi, J., Tuzlukova, V., Al Kaabi, K., & Hadra, M. (2022). Assistive Technology in the English Language Classroom: Reality and Perspectives. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 13 (6), 1203-1210. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1306.08>.

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