

# A Memory Like No Other



Yusif Elias Abdullah



## **A Memory Like No Other**

'A Memory Like No Other' is a collection of short stories that capture the experiences of a group of PhD students at Karabuk University during the academic years 2021/2022 to 2025/2026. At the end of each semester of their four-year program, a story was written to reflect the events, challenges, and obstacles they faced in addition to the unforgettable and joyful moments they shared together.



## End of Semester I

In a cool Karabuk spring morning, students are having a breakfast at Hemma Dormitory. Following breakfast, Yusif asked his colleague Ridha if they could head to Karabuk University early as it was the final day of the first semester of the PhD program. After having a cup of tea, both passed through old buildings and trees in a way that takes around 15 minutes on foot to university.

Yusif: Look at the shimmering water of the river! It's beautiful today.

Ridha: Yes, and the birds are singing, making the surroundings even more charming.

Yusif: What an amazing view! The trees are so green, and the river is unusually full today.

Ridha: It's probably because the snow has started melting in the mountains nearby. Anyway, I'm happy today because it's the final day, and we'll finally be free. I feel like I've been here for years. I also had to work so hard on all those courses – it was overwhelming!

Yusif: Come on man! Karabuk is nice, and the courses were smooth. We feel as if we were in our own countries.

Ridha: You are right, but it is my first time leaving my family for such a long time. I miss them.

Yusif: It is just a matter of days, and you will be Algeria, God willing.

Yusif: What do you think of our dormitory?

Ridha: It is a good one and all students are friendly. We spent fantastic nights with our colleagues, especially Khalifa, Hani, Abdulrahman, Kareem, Ibraheem and Mazen. We used to stay up with each oth-

er almost every night. We also used to discuss various issues related to our social lives, history, literature and of course marriage, my favorite topic.

Yusif: I agree with you especially about marriage. You have been haunted by this idea since your first day in Karabuk. I don't know why!

Ridha: No, I was kidding my friend.

Yusif: [smiling] Kidding or serious! It is up to you. When you make your final decision tell me. I may help you in this concern.

Ridha: Just ignore this idea.

Yusif: Why? No one can hear us!

Ridha: Still, walls have ears.

Yusif: We will be at university in five minutes. Do you have a student ID card to access through the eastern gate? My card is not activated till the moment.

Ridha: My card is not activated as well.

Yusif: Okay then, we have to go through the main gate. Let's visit Professor A. Serdar, the Head of English Language Department, before the lecture since this is the last day of the semester.

Ridha: A good idea.

### **[At Prof. A. Serdar's Office]**

Yusif: How are my dear Professor?

Professor: I am fine, what about you and your families?

Yusif: We are all fine prof., thank you.

Ridha: I am fine prof. thank you.

Professor: How was the semester?

Yusif: It was a great one. We enjoyed it very much. Many thanks to you prof., and our thanks go to all other professors of Karabuk University.

Professor: Ridha, what about you? How was the course?

Ridha: It was very nice, but I missed my family!

Professor: Oh yea. Have you got married?

Ridha: No prof. I was kidding. I will never marry again.

Yusif: No prof., he wasn't kidding, he changed his mind. He was thinking of the second wife, but there was something wrong happened to him. He changed his mind suddenly. He might have a dream or even a nightmare that forced him to change his mind!

Professor: What about you Yusif? You push him to marry and forget yourself!

Yusif: [smiling] Okay prof. I push him to marry not to commit a crime! In Algeria, polygamy is allowed. Now, he has a golden opportunity to have one in Turkey and one in Algeria! For me, I also think of that, waiting for the convenient time.

Ridha: This time will never ever come because you are just like me. You like just to talk without any actions "much ado about nothing"!

Yusif: [smiling] May be. Anyway prof. We like joking with each other to pass time.

Professor: What about your papers? Did you complete your assignments?

Yusif: Yes prof., everything is going smoothly.

Ridha: We are almost done, thanks prof.

Yusif: Five minutes left for Prof. Tavghah's lecture. See you prof. next semester. We wish you all the best.

Ridha: See you prof.

Professor: See you.

### **[Heading to the classroom]**

Ridha: our colleagues have arrived in the classroom.

Yusif: Let's join them.

Ridha: Hello, how are you guys?

Lina, Husam, Hanan and Shayma: We are fine.

Yusif: How are you, my colleagues? [all answer with fine] How is it today, the last day of the semester?

Lina: it is amazing.

[Jebreel enters talking about a picnic]

Jebreel: What about a picnic next weekend, guys? You have to bring your dishes with you!

Yusif: Where to go?

Jebreel: Not too far. We are planning to visit a breathtaking area on the outskirts of Karabuk.

Yusif: I am not sure if I'll be in Karabuk next weekend or travelling. Anyway, if I am in Karabuk, I will join you along with a takeaway dish or two. But it won't be a home-cooked dish.

Jebreel: You will breach the picnic norms. Everyone should abide by the picnic regulations.

Lina: Our professor is coming.

Prof. Tavghah: Hello.

Classmates: Hi prof.

Prof. Tavghah: Today is our last lecture and we are going to discuss our final play in detail. Before starting the lecture, just open the window, the weather is hot in here.

Lina: No prof. the weather is nice. It is cool.

Prof. Tavghah: Yes, I see, that is why you are wearing all these winter clothes. You live in Karabuk not in Eskimos! Open the window.

Lina: Karabuk is much colder than Eskimos. [The lecture starts with laugh of all classmates]

### **[Following 1 hour]**

Ahmad: Could you open the window? It was closed again because of the wind.

Shayma: keep the window closed because it is a bit noisy outside. There are some construction works.

Ahmad: The noise is over, open the window now.

Prof. Tavghah: Shayam why you are wearing your mask like this? You cover only your mouth and leave you nose! Will this way protect you against COVID-19?

Shayma: No prof. I used to wear it like this. Sometimes, it suffocates me!

Jebreel: After the lecture, we will discuss our next picnic.

### **[Following 2 hours]**

Ridha: [whispering] Though it is last lecture, our prof. explained the play in detail.

Prof. Tavgah: Yusif what are you going to cover in your presentation?

Yusif: Yes prof., I will cover style and characters especially the character of Victoria.

Prof. Tavgah: Will you create or add a new character to the play? There is no Victoria in the whole play!

Yusif: How come? Victoria is the most important character!

Prof. Tavgah: Apparently, you are thinking of a different play. What is wrong with you?

Yusif: Sorry prof., apparently, Ridha infected me with his sleep problems.

Ridha: Homer sometimes nods!

Prof. Tavgah: Sometimes or always?

Yusif: Of course, sometimes, otherwise the proverb gets meaningless.

### **[Following 30 minutes]**

Ridha: The lecture will be over in a few minutes.

Yusif: Is there anything wrong?

Ridha: Yes, I need to sleep.

Yusif: Still, we have one more lecture.

Lina: Prof., we need your email to send our final papers.

[Prof. Tavghah: writes the email with capital T and S]

Yusif: Are the T and S capital or small?

Prof. Tavghah: Small.

Shayma: It doesn't matter for emails as long as letters are the same.

Husam: Yes, it doesn't.

Yusif: Not always, guys. Sometimes, senders encounter some problems because of that.

Husam: Always, always, always.

Yusif: [smiling] Okay then, Husam sounds very sure.

Prof. Tavghah: The lecture is over. See you next semester and I wish all of you a happy vacation.

Hanan: Many thanks prof. for this amazing course. It was really exciting and informative. It enriched our information about English theatre through the multiple plays that we studied. We wish you the best of luck.

Classmates: We appreciate your sincere efforts and hope to meet you next semester.

Prof. Tavghah: See you.

Yusif: [talking to Ridha] Let's go to pray Al-Duhr before Prof. Nazil's lecture.

Ridha: Yes, let's go. [heading to the mosque]

Yusif: Yesterday, we had our last two lectures with Prof. A. Serdar and Prof. Nayef. The two courses were meritorious and interesting. I enjoyed them very much.

Ridha: Yes, I submitted a good presentation to Prof. A. Serdar besides a good paper to Prof. Nayef.

Yusif: Great. One of the things I liked about Karabuk University is the articles that we usually write for our assignments since our professors ask for publishable articles.

Ridha: Yes, but most universities do like this.

Yusif: No, I don't agree with you. Many universities around the world still depend on traditional techniques of assessment even for MA and PhD programs. I have already joined an MA program at a state university in India. By the way, the two ways are good, but I am in favor of Karabuk's educational system. In my first MA program, I and my colleagues, at that time, were asked to memorize entire books. We also used to have one final exam at the end of each year. During the exam, we had to write around 5000 words in three hours. It was very difficult because we had to understand the books well in addition to memorizing many other things such as definitions. It was a nail-biting final exam.

Ridha: It is a good way that highly contributes to enhancing your writing skills.

Yusif: You are right, but it was very difficult and such ways don't focus on research aspects which are very important for MA and PhD students. For me, I believe it is inconvenient to implement such traditional techniques in MA and PhD programs. They can be implemented in BA programs.

Ridha: May be.

Yusif: I believe research techniques are very important for higher studies students because such programs pave the way for students to be good researchers in the future. That's why we enjoyed Prof. Nayef's course. Didn't you?

Ridha: Yes, of course. I enjoyed it too much and I benefitted from this course. It contributes to boosting students' creative writing skills, especially when it comes to writing literary papers and articles.

Yusif: Did you know? I love Karabuk and Turkey too much.

Ridha: Why?

Yusif: I love to travel and stay in Turkey for too many reasons. One of these reasons is that Turkey is a Muslim country just like our Arab countries and we can find mosques and other Islamic landmarks everywhere. When we travel to Europe, we miss all these things, therefore I prefer Turkey to any other country. The Turkish people are friendly as well, especially in Karabuk. For me, the best example of that is our Professor A. Serdar. He is very friendly, cooperative, and inspiring professor. I really respect him.

Ridha: You are right. Everyone at Karabuk University and everyone knows Prof. A. Serdar respects him too much and appreciates his constant assistance.

Yusif: Prof. Nazila's lecture is about to start. Let's join our colleagues.

Ridha: We still have around 5 minutes. Anyway, let's go there.

Yusif: [at the classroom] Hello guys, my friend Ahmad Sameer, how are you?

Ahmad: I am fine.

Yusif: Are you ready for the lecture?

Ahmad: Yes, as usual.

Yusif: Wonderful.

Ahmad: Our professor is coming.

Prof. Nazila: Hi guys.

Classmates: Hi prof.

Prof. Nazil: How are you doing?

Classmates: Everything is going smoothly, prof.

Prof. Nazila: Great as long as everything is going smoothly till the moment, and this is the first moment of our last lecture.

Yusif: Yes, prof. your course was very valuable, we really appreciate your efforts. I liked Postcolonial Theory because of your course. I will apply this theory in my upcoming PhD dissertation, God willing. You made everything easy for us.

Lina: The course was smooth because of your exceptional efforts prof. as well as the amusing materials that you chose for us to study throughout the course.

Ahmad: Yes prof., we feel the semester passed quickly, just like a few days.

Prof. Nazila: Many thanks to all of you. Now let's start with our lecture.

### **[Following 2 hours]**

Prof. Nazila: These are the highlights of today's lecture. If you have any questions or inquiries, you can ask.

Ahmad: Many thanks prof., you provided us with amazing material about various literary works that we studied in light of Postcolonial Theory. Such materials helped us improve our skills and expand our imagination about different aspects, especially post-colonial-related issues. Postcolonialism touches us because we suffered too much and still suffer from the colonization impact.

Yusif: Absolutely right.

Ahmad: this disaster, I mean colonialism, contributed to destroying our countries. We also learned from you that students, especially higher studies students, are the cream of society who must rise to face challenges and contain all negative social practices. We learned from you to be constructive members of society and contribute to building responsible societies as well.

Yusif: One more thing prof., your lectures raised our awareness on several issues and helped us identify the aftermath and legacy of imperialism and colonialism. You inspired us to be more optimistic and do our best to support peace, justice, and advancement of knowledge. We really thank you and hope to meet you once again next semester.

Prof. Nazil: Thanks to all. See you.

### **[Following 30 minutes]**

Yusif: [talking to Ridha] Now, the whole semester is over. Let's go home.

Ridha: Yes, we have to go now.

Yusif: Did you know? I did my best to join Prof. Harith's course, but I couldn't. There was an overlap with the course of Prof. Nayef. As you know, Prof. Nayef's course is obligatory. We can't skip it. Let's see next semester. If his course's timing is convenient, I will join. He is one of the best professors. He is also very helpful and cooperative. He likes to help all students.

Ridha: You are preaching to the choir. I know him well. He is an amazing professor.

Yusif: From now on, you don't need to study or prepare anything for lectures. Now, you need only to relax before flying to Algeria.

Ridah: No not yet my friend.

Yusif: What is wrong?

Ridha: I did not finish the final paper for Prof. Nayef.

Yusif: You have not finished yet? What were you doing man! Were you sleeping all over past days?

Ridha: No, I was busy with the other courses.

Yusif: Okay then, you need to work hard to finish as soon as possible. What is the deadline?

Ridha: I am not sure. I believe next week.

Yusif: Let's call our colleague Sarmad. He is our guide on this course.

Ridha: You can send him a WhatsApp message.

Yusif: I will call. [ringing] Hi Saramd, how are you?

Sarmad: I am fine.

Yusif: Just one question about the deadline for Prof. Nayef's final assignment.

Sarmad: It is due this week. You have to submit it before the weekend.

Yusif: Many thanks.

Ridha: I will do my best to finish on time.

Yusif: Yes, you need to work hard in order to finish on time and then get ready for flying to Algeria.

Ridha: My problem lies in the Arabic line of poetry that you always tell.

Yusif: Yea, that line about sleep. It was written by the Arab poet Maarouf Al-Rasafi, criticizing colonization and injustice in Iraq and the Arab countries in general. He said, "Oh people don't speak, speech is forbidden, otherwise, sleep and don't wake up, as no one wins except for sleepers".

Ridha: Yes, that is the point.

Yusif: In 3 minutes, we will arrive at dormitory. I am going to relax in my room. See you tomorrow before flying to Kuwait.

Ridha: Take care.



## End of Semester II

In snowy Karabuk morning, with freezing temperatures below zero, students proceed via narrow paths amongst snow-covered trees to the different colleges of Karabuk University. The white clouds meet with the white color of snow that covers the mountains and streets to make an amazing white portrait of a typical winter day in Karabuk. Hard-working students were stepping carefully through snow to arrive at university before 8 am, the time of starting lectures. At Auditorium 3 on the third floor of Faculty of Arts' Building, some PhD students arrived early and started conversing with each other, discussing various issues related to their courses.

Yusif: Today's lectures are exciting as they are the last lectures of semester II.

Mohammad: they are also important since they summarize what is required for completing the semester and passing the final assessments.

Yusif: yes guys, it is a great moment. Today, everything will be clear, and we will be free soon, just after completing our final papers.

Ridha: it will be a nice time. A time to relax!

Yusif: hopefully, everything will go smoothly. Mohammad, will you travel to Libya soon?

Mohammad: till now, I am not sure. There are many things to finish.

Ridha: try to finish as soon as possible.

Mohammad: what about you, Ridha?

Ridha: I am travelling at the end of the course; on the same day the course finishes.

Yusif: have nice journeys guys.

Mohammad: international students always wait for the end of the course to travel as they miss their countries and families.

Ahmad: you're absolutely right. What about you Sarmad?

Sarmad: Just like my other colleagues, at the end of the course.

Mohammad: and you Abdullah.

Abdullah: I and Sarmad always work together, stay together and travel together as well.

Yusif: we wish you all the best guys. Has the lecture started?

Mohammad: I think it is starting in a few minutes.

Yusif: shall we go to the auditorium?

Colleagues: yes, let's go.

### **[before entering auditorium]**

Lina: come on guys, Professor A. Serdar's lecture is about to start!

Yusif: let's join.

Students: [entering] good morning, Professor.

Professor A. Serdar: good morning. How are you Guys?

Students: we are fine Professor.

Professor: you know this is our last lecture. We need to finish our course today and if you need any assistance, now or later, just contact me, or visit me at office.

Students: sure Professor, many thanks.

Students: we really appreciate your efforts Professor. We enjoyed the course too much.

Professor: why?

Yusif: for me, I like the courses which are connected with religion and comparative studies.

Lina: I like the course because it enriched our knowledge about the relation between religions and how religions sometimes agree with each other and sometimes differ.

Mohammad: I like it, because I got aware of differences between the major religions especially Islam and Christianity.

Hanan: I like the course because it is connected with globalization. I like globalization and technological advancement issues which made our world just like a small village. Because of this development, we can communicate with each other at any time and get all information we need easily.

Asma: I like the title of the course, "Religion, Culture and Globalization", because it highlights major parts of our lives and how every person may deal differently with these parts; I mean people deal differently with the issues of religion, culture, and globalization. As for people, there are believers, disbelievers, and agnostics in addition to different cultures of people. Sometimes the same country includes people of different cultures as well.

Ahmad: the course gave us an opportunity to compare religions and identify differences and how people used to perform their rituals in the past and present times.

Professor: great, let's start now. [the lecture starts]

**[after 1 hour and a half]**

Professor: before the lecture ends, do you have any questions?

Students: no Professor, everything is clear. Many thanks for your efforts.

Professor: most welcome and I am always there if you need assistance.

Students: sure, Professor many thanks and we hope to meet you once again in upcoming courses.

Mohammad: [whispering] time passed very quickly. I feel as if the course just started yesterday.

Lina: because we were too busy and when you're busy we feel that "time flies".

Asma: you're right Lina time flies and we have to do our best to finish all our duties on time as "time and tide wait for no man". If we are busy now, I believe we will be busier in the next semesters.

Mohammad: anyway, the course was an amusing one.

Yusif: it was also smooth.

Sarmad: the course is over now and what we need is just to remember the techniques that we have learned.

Abdullah: techniques are very important especially for students who intend to work or lecture at universities in the future.

Professor: okay dear students. That is all about the course, if you have any inquiries, you can ask now, otherwise you can leave. See you later.

Students: see you Professor.

**[Professor A. Serdar leaves auditorium]**

Yusif: let's have a break, guys.

Ridha: actually, it is highly required.

Yusif: okay then, let's have some coffee. Let's go to the café now as the next lecture will start soon.

Yusif: what would you like to drink?

Mohammad: for me, Turkish coffee, medium.

Ridha, me too.

Yusif: a good order!

Mohammad: why?

Yusif: it must be like this!

Mohammad: why must? And why did you use this word frequently in your presentations?

Yusif: [smiling] not to leave an option for you! I used "must" because you ordered Turkish coffee and you're in Turkey, therefore it is the best place to get original coffee!

Mohammad: aha! alright.

Ridha: there are many other delicious things in Turkey.

Yusif: I like nuts, especially cashews, and almond.

Ridha: I like chestnuts and hazelnuts.

Mohammad: for me, I like the Turkish desserts especially Baklava or as they call it in Turkey "Baklava".

Ridha: what I like most about Turkey is parks since they are prepared well for barbecue. Do you remember our last picnic, Yusif?

Yusif: of course, I do, it was amazing! Our companions were amazing. Professor A. Serdar was there, Professor Nayef and Professor Harith, too. When you talk about picnics, I always remember our colleague, Jebreel.

Ridha: he was there.

Yusif: yes, he always organizes good picnics.

Ridha: he became an expert in organizing picnics and events!

Yusif: I think it is time to join Professor Mustafa's lecture. Shall we go, guys?

Mohammad: yes, let's go.

**[meeting some colleagues near the auditorium]**

Yusif: hi guys! Has the lecture started?

Students: not yet, but Professor Mustafa is there.

Yusif: let's go inside.

**[students enter the auditorium]**

Students: good morning, Professor.

Professor: good morning, how are you guys?

Students: we are fine Professor. What about you?

Professor: I am fine. Listen guys, this is our last lecture. Now you're almost done. You need just to prepare your final papers soon. I really wish you the best of luck.

Yusif: thank you very much Professor.

Mohammad: we really enjoyed the course.

Ridha: it was informative and contributed to enriching our information about the nineteenth century novel.

Yusif: I like the idea of studying various novels during the semester because it helps us gain more information and explore the genre that we study well.

Mohammad: yes, and all novels we studied were exciting ones.

Igueh: the novels provided us with a detailed account of the Victorian Novel and helped us explore more details on the characteristics of the novels of that era.

Ridha: we also enjoyed presentations that our colleagues delivered during the course.

Lina: the presentations were miscellaneous, and everyone covered different issues or novels which enabled us to get acquainted with new novels.

Yusif: I liked the idea of answering questions about the novel that we would discuss the following week. This idea motivated us to focus more on the details of novels and get ready for discussions during the lectures.

### **[after one hour and a half]**

Mohammad: the last lecture always has a special resonance as it indicates the imminent end of the course.

Ridha: it refers to something different for each one of us!

Mohammad: what do you mean?

Ridha: it means freedom and looming journey toward homeland.

Mohammad: apparently, you missed Algeria too much.

Ridha: sure! I am homesick.

Yusif: we wish you a safe journey to Algeria, Ridha.

Ridha: it also refers to something else!

Mohammad: what is it?

Ridha: the end of toil!

Mohammad: why? was it that difficult?

Ridha: yes, we had to work hard and prepare different materials for different courses every week!

Yusif: it was difficult but amusing and enjoyable at the same time.

Ridha: I agree with you guys, but everyone felt exhausted because of the multiple duties that we had to perform.

Mohammad: when we have a difficult task, we feel under huge pressure and after accomplishing it we taste the flavor of success. It is a great feeling!

Ridha: yes, the joy of achievement is ineffable.

Yusif: with success at the end of our missions, we forget all about our previous efforts and toil.

Mohammad: at that time, it becomes like an exciting memory or experience of ours. I love that.

Iguez: actually, the course was a bit difficult because of certain tasks, especially preparing publishable articles. By the way, I like this idea too much, although it requires a bit long time!

Ridha: which idea?

Iguez: publishable articles.

Mohammad: why?

Iguez: because students in general pay more attention to articles when publishable ones are required.

Yusif: I hate only one thing about publishable articles; it is the restrictions.

Mohammad: which restrictions?

Yusif: when we write publishable articles, we need to adhere to the instructions of the journal and use a certain theory or theories in addition to a certain number of sources. You know, we need to support our ideas with quotes of others. I hate that too much!

Mohammad: you're right.

Yusif: for me, literature students shouldn't be restricted with such things as they need always to use their imagination and think creatively. I believe most PhD students are outstanding, otherwise how they could complete their previous educational stages like the MA and BA.

Ridha: may be!

Yusif: if I were a Professor, I will do my best to help students feel free and release their latent potential. I think the only thing they need is motivation and support.

Mohammad: what else?

Yusif: if I were a Professor, I would ask my students to write short stories instead of publishable articles.

Mohammad: it sounds logical, but still students need to write publishable articles.

Yusif: I agree with you, but students should be required to write a publishable article only one time per semester. We don't need to write more than that.

Ridha: why?

Yusif: because, you know, everyone can publish articles and journals usually adopt different criteria for publication. Paid journals are easy to access and publish your articles because publication is a kind of business. On the other hand, free journals receive a huge number of articles, therefore you will be very lucky if you get your article published.

Ridha: I don't agree with you. Journals are good, the whole matter depends on students themselves as some of them like to publish articles and others don't.

Mohammad: in this short break, let's pray Al-Duhr.

Ridha: okay then, after prayer we will join our last lecture for today and the last lecture of the whole course.

**[after 20 minutes]**

Yusif: okay guys, let's join Professor Ozkan's lecture.

[Professor Ozkan enters auditorium]

Professor Ozkan: hi guys!

Students: hello Professor!

Professor: okay guys let's start now because we have many issues to talk about today. Since this is our last lecture, we need to cover the remaining points of this course.

Students: okay Professor.

Yusif: yes Professor, we are about to finish the course. It was a bit difficult.

Professor: why?

Ridha: because we were too busy Professor., and we had to complete various tasks for different courses.

Sarmad: this course required harder efforts because of peer writing as we needed to coordinate with our partners and get their feedback and then we work accordingly.

Ahmad: it was a busy course, but exciting at the same time.

Abdullah: we enjoyed it.

Mohammad: anyway, the tiring things, we enjoy them more after completion.

Ridha: are you sure?

Mohammad: yes, according to my own opinion.

Professor: yes, this is a course for PhD students, therefore it should be a bit different from the other courses.

Students: no problem, Professor now we are almost finished therefore we forgot all about hard work and efforts as long as our efforts were successful.

Professor: who has a presentation today?

Yusif: me.

Professor: okay, you can start.

Yusif: okay.

Yusif: dear colleagues, my presentation is about second language writing acquisition. It will be divided into two sections. The first section covers some studies and linguistic theories while the second section covers some lessons learned from our practical life.

Sarmad: you mean the whole presentation is about second language writing acquisition?

Yusif: yes, it is.

Sarmad: both sections?

Yusif: yes, Sarmad, the whole presentation is about second language writing acquisition, but the second section highlights practical experiences based on my own opinion.

**[after 15 minutes]**

Abdullah: during the presentation, you asked students some questions, you could have avoided that as you are not a professor!

Yusif: yes, I am not, but I liked to engage students and motivate them to participate in the presentation as well as knowing their opinions about some issues.

Abdullah: why is that?

Yusif: every piece of writing has a message to deliver to the people and I wanted to draw the attention of students to this significant issue. I also wanted to draw the attention of students to the fact that every one of us can deliver good write-ups, including second language writers, not only native writers.

Abdullah: is that according to your opinion?

Yusif: yes, but this issue is very important because it motivates second language writers to interest more in their writing. Anyway, the second section depends on my own opinion while the first section is built on previous studies and theories.

Abdullah: you still need to use sources!

Yusif: yes, Abdullah, I did. At the beginning of the presentation, I said I hate using sources, but I did not say that I didn't use sources. Now, let's move to the last slides of the presentation. Do you see? There are two slides for references.

Ridha: I liked the motivation part, and I advise you to elaborate it more.

Yusif: it is there!

Ridha: yes, but you did not talk about it as a main idea just like "determination, exercise and self-confidence".

Yusif: yes, you're right. Many thanks for this remark.

**[after 30 minutes]**

Yusif: anyway guys, that is all about my presentation. If you have any questions, you can ask now.

**[after one hour]**

Professor: listen guys, we are about to finish our last lecture. If you have any questions about the whole course, you can ask now and if need any clarifications later, you can come to my office.

Students: thank you very much Prof.

[Prof. Ozkan leaves]

Yusif: are you ready to leave guys?

Mohammad: yes, I am leaving for Ankara right now.

Yusif: my journey towards Kuwait starts after one hour.

Ridha: I am leaving for Algeria soon.

Yusif: see you dear colleagues. I wish to meet all of you within the next semester. I wish you good luck and happy journeys to your countries.

Mohammad and Ridha: take care.



## End of Semester III

Once again, PhD students at Karabuk University experience new feelings of stress and anxiety as the Comprehensive Exam is approaching. They did their best during the past months to prepare themselves well for the exam, release stress and acquire the required energy to cope with this sensitive stage of the PhD program since failing to pass this exam leads to critical implications such as a further extension of the 4-year program or even missing the whole program, if a candidate fails to pass it two times.

The 8 PhD students – Yusif, Ayman, Lina, Sarmad, Abdullah, Ahmad, Sajid, and Ridha – gathered at Karabuk University in a sunny Karabukian morning with a gentle breeze blowing from the western side of the city. They met with each other after a 4-month preparation process for their final exam of the third semester, hoping to pass and avoid any possible complications. They arrived early at university prior to the exam timing.

These students enjoyed great qualities, specifically optimism which effectively helped them overcome most difficulties. When students felt that the exam was approaching and it would be very difficult, they concentrated only on one thing, which is how to pass and nothing else. They were serious enough, up to the challenge and ready to fight till the last gasp. The 8 students were sure that “success is no accident” and they had to exert all possible efforts to reap the fruit of their toil. They worked according to that and stepped forward to achieving their aspired goals.

In addition to optimism and hard work, they enjoyed all factors of success including the high potential, self-confidence, and determination to pass. They did not leave any gap for failure. They were serious, active, and smart enough to deal with the various requirements of the course. These qualities made this 8-student batch an amazing one which didn't include any low-performing student. All of them were excellent and passed their previous courses smoothly.

At 9 am, students headed to the assigned auditorium for their written exam. At the beginning, they felt confused and a bit afraid while waiting for the exam papers. They were thinking of the questions which might be difficult to answer or might require a longer time than the allocated three-hour duration. In these moments, they felt that time had slowed down and each second lasted for minutes. They just wanted to get the exam paper and have a quick look at the questions!

They were looking at the exam papers between the hands of the invigilator, wishing the invigilator to distribute papers at once. When they received the papers, they made sure that the exam was too long and a bit complicated. They experienced more feelings of being nervous, and under huge pressure and tension.

The exam was complicated because it covered multiple genres such as drama, novel, poetry, literary theories, etc. When the students saw the questions, they felt that they had missed the track, and the situation was uncontrollable as they couldn't recall the required information and data for such intricate questions. In fact, this was because of fear and being confused. Following a sigh of relief, they began overcoming their fears and recalling information beside the feeling of relaxation. They also looked quieter and more resilient to answer their exam questions professionally.

Almost all students experience such feelings during exams as they feel they can remember nothing since scattered thoughts, at the beginning along with distributing exam papers, distract their attention and interrupt their logical thinking. After some time, they experience a different feeling in which information and data start flowing to their minds and throughout their pens.

When they read the questions well, they could decrease pressure and tension. They also felt more relaxed and restored balanced thinking. However, with every attempt or exam, students learn further lessons and become more aware of significance of being relaxed since stress doesn't allow students to think well. Once they feel relaxed, they can recall information better and be more competent to answer the exam questions and complete their tasks.

In the midway of the 3-hour session, smiles started overwhelming the faces of students and joy had replaced stress since things progressed as they liked, and they did well during the exam through overcoming most of their obstacles.

All students have done their best to defend their literary opinions and practices in a wide variety of literary studies covering various genres. For students, this required tremendous efforts to master as it almost covered most aspects of English literature.

The written part of the exam paved the way for them to do better in the second oral part. They felt more confident and motivated to successfully complete the 3-hour oral exam from 1 to 4 pm. This feeling energized them to do well in the oral exam as well. At the end, they all passed and started preparing for the next stage of the program.

During this exam, students experienced an odd breakdown of binaries or even a mix of contradictory feelings such as worry/relaxation, stress/relief, anger/satisfaction, sadness/happiness and love/hatred. They experienced fear at the beginning of the exam and relaxation after receiving the exam papers and reading the questions well.

They also felt angry as they thought that they didn't study well for the exam, and then they experienced a counter feeling of satisfaction after doing well. All the negative feelings have been turned into positive ones with the lapse of around one hour as they could recall the information and data needed to answer the questions.

Students learned one more thing, which is difficult times always lead to great and sweet memories. These difficulties have been turned into joy after success and students even felt nostalgia for these days after completing their course. They used to have this feeling whenever they remembered the days they spent with each other and how they used to help each other during exams.

They had such a sense because they were mature students who believed

that “great things never come from comfort zones” and they are mid-way of achieving one of the best objectives in life, especially for students, which is obtaining the PhD degree, the ultimate aspiration of most students.

To this end, they spared no effort and harnessed all potential to climb up the academic pyramid and reach the top through completing this ambitious program.

## End of Semester IV

At the end of the fourth semester of their doctoral program, some students gathered at Karabuk University. In this semester, the majority of students defended their proposals online via various social network platforms like Teams and Zoom instead of attending physically. Yusif and Ahmad Harbouk preferred to visit university, meet their professors, and defend their proposals in person.

Ahmad lives near university in Karabuk, while Yusif has travelled over 1,600 miles through a 4-hour-flight to arrive in the calm city, northwestern Turkey. However, the fourth semester progressed smoothly, and students felt comfortable. There was an overwhelming sense of relief amongst students as the semester was a bit different from the other ones in terms of the relentless pressure that had become part of the previous academic semesters.

His change was obvious for Ahmad who is a dedicated student known for his meticulous approach to studies. The expected stress that accompanied deadlines and exams seemed to have decreased and taken a backseat, offering more space for a relaxing atmosphere.

Yusif observed the little number of students at university as most students finished their courses. The corridors, squares, and premises of university are usually full of students during the academic semesters. The library, which usually hosted an intense concentration of students and their textbooks, accommodated now with more spontaneous conversations and collaborative study sessions.

A while ago, the campus was like a haven distinguished from creativity and exploration in which students were engaged in discussions about various issues, not just about their study, but also about life, dreams, and aspirations. Students also felt the retreat of the overwhelming pressure which contributed to fostering a sense of friendship and amazing connection among the students.

Yusif and Ahmad headed to the office of their supervisor Professor, Abdul Serdar ÖZTURK to discuss proposals. During discussions, they listened to the professor's instructions well. At the end of the session, professor congratulated both for their successful proposals and wished them the best of luck. For them, it was a moment of triumph, proof of their hard work and dedication, as the professor approved proposals and encouraged them to proceed accordingly.

The completion of the course represents an end of a chapter of their study, and at the same time, it refers to a new beginning and a new chapter waiting for them. All PhD students, after being armed with further knowledge and experiences, started preparing for the next academic stage. They decided to meet each other and discuss the intricacies of what is required for the next stage.

Amid the preparations for the next academic stage, friendships that had grown within the previous courses have been strengthened more and more. The triumphs and challenges they met with each other had woven strong bond of companionship and great friendship, exceeding the boundaries of their classroom.

At the end of this successful day, students left for their dormitories with a sense of accomplishment and triumph that represents the completion of another semester of their long program. The completion of the course wasn't just a signal of their academic journey; it was evidence of their resilience and the beginning of a new chapter. With hearts filled with optimism and minds prepared for encountering challenges, these students do their best to meet all requirements of the next course, taking into consideration that each step brings them closer to the fulfillment of their academic aspirations.

## End of Semester V

With the lapse of four more months, PhD students at Karabuk University stepped closer to their ultimate objective of completing the rigorous PhD program which is expected to consume nearly four years of their lives. The final days of the semester were intense and full of activity.

During the semester, students sat hunched over their desks, typing on their laptops to finish on time. Some of them were surrounded by drafts of their uncompleted chapters and buried in a stack of books, reviewing their notes meticulously and marking many pages with colorful annotations.

Preparations and presentations filled their schedules, while immense efforts were exerted to meet the looming deadlines for submitting the required chapters of their dissertations. As per the university rules, students are expected to submit certain chapters at the end of each semester to obtain their professors' feedback on their work progress and proceed further. Some students have already submitted the required materials, while others are still working hard to meet the deadline within the next two days.

Since the last semester, students have been working on their dissertations and some have made significant progress, while others are still striving to balance their busy schedules with their academic requirements. After completing the first three semesters of the PhD program, some students preferred to stay in their hometowns, conducting interviews and tests with their professors online. Others traveled to Turkey for face-to-face exams, preferring this method over the online approach.

The PhD program is challenging, with obstacles at every turn. However, these mature students have overcome most difficulties through cooperation, sharing experiences, and helping each other navigate the challenges. This se-

mester, like the previous ones, was successful, reflecting the students' great determination and willingness to excel in this prestigious program. All students have been in touch with each other to check and verify the next steps to be taken. This effective coordination contributed to reducing mistakes and raising students' awareness about the program requirements.

One night, before the end of the course, some students were studying with each other in a café near university in which the clock struck midnight, signaling the end of another tiring day. The friends gathered their belongings and headed out into the cool night air together. The streets of Karabuk were quiet, the city's usual hustle and bustle subdued in the late hour. The weight of the semester seemed to lift from their shoulders with each step they took away from the university.

One of them looked up at the clear night sky and said: can you believe we're almost done? His voice filled with wonder and disbelief! Another student nodded in agreement, saying: future is uncertain, but we've done so much. Therefore, whatever comes next, we'll face it together and overcome it through cooperation and hard work.

They are all aware of the significance of cooperation and how it saves their time and effort. When some of them get confused or unsure of certain information or requirements of the course, they used to convene and discuss all hazy or pending issues to keep each other updated about every single step in the program. They also used to coordinate with the other students staying abroad via WhatsApp and other social media platforms to keep them updated on the latest developments at university.

These meetings typically occur on cool Karabukian spring nights during the second semester or on extremely cold fall nights during the first semester of each year. The spring evenings were marked by a gentle breeze carrying the rich aroma of strong coffee from nearby cafes, blending with the students' relentless efforts and determination for achieving their academic projects. In

contrast, the fall nights often kept students inside their residences, as the cold weather made it difficult to venture out.

During their final meeting of the fifth semester, they agreed to submit their contributions by the next day before departing for various destinations either inside Turkey or abroad. Some students live in other Turkish cities and others would travel to their hometowns in different countries.



## End of Semester VI

On the evening of 19 September 2024, the PhD program students – Yusif, Aymen, Ridha, Lina, and Abdullah – gathered online with their Professors Serdar Öztürk and Harith Turki for a significant meeting to discuss the progress of their dissertations. The students were in different countries including Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Jordan, and Iraq, joining the virtual session to share updates on their latest chapters and receive feedback of their professors.

As the meeting was about to begin, students carefully prepared their electronic devices, making sure everything was working well to ensure a smooth and efficient meeting. This session was of great importance because it would determine which students were on track to pass the semester-end exam and which might face setbacks.

A failure in this exam would lead to critical consequences such as the delay of the completion of the four-year program. Failure in each semester also means that the student will study an additional semester later.

In the months leading up to this meeting, the students had been working tirelessly to meet the precise academic requirements for their dissertations. Throughout the semester, they had regular check-ins with their professors, either online or face-to-face, to assess their progress. These sessions served as milestones, providing both guidance and feedback to ensure they were on the right path, and they could proceed accordingly.

Despite their good preparation, the students couldn't help but feel anxious, aware that any missteps could have a lasting impact on their academic journey and extend the duration of the program. As they connected virtually, there was an undercurrent of nervous anticipation, but they knew this meeting would be pivotal for their academic futures. They attempted to pull themselves together to overcome anxiety and do well during the meeting.

The meeting lasted for around two hours, during which the professors carefully reviewed each student's work, discussing the strengths of their dissertations as well as the areas that needed improvement. They highlighted key aspects that required revision in order to ensure that the dissertations met all academic standards. The professors also provided valuable advice on how to refine their arguments and structure, guiding the students toward producing work that would stand out academically.

Each student took turns presenting their progress in detail, defending their research and offering insights into their thought processes. They engaged in thoughtful discussions, justifying their approaches to different aspects of their dissertations and responding to feedback. It was a lively exchange of ideas, with the students actively involved in shaping the direction of their work.

The students listened well to the professors' comments and wrote down each comment carefully to deal with it later. They have clear plans for this semester and the next ones as well. When they receive professors' comments, they usually handle all comments before starting with the next chapter. This step helps them produce more precise chapters in the upcoming semester.

By the end of the meeting, the results were clear: all five students had successfully passed their semester-end exams. The relief was unmistakable as they received confirmation that they had met the necessary criteria.

With this milestone behind them, the students immediately began to handle professors' comments and focus on their next challenge: preparing for the upcoming semester-end exam, which would take place at the close of the following semester. The path ahead was still a bit long, but they were one step closer to completing their doctoral programs.

## End of Semester VII

The seventh semester of the PhD program at Karabuk University is rapidly drawing to a close, marking a pivotal moment in the academic journey of the doctoral candidates. Over the course of this semester, students have reached a significant milestone by successfully defending the chapters of their dissertations they had been diligently working on.

This event, held at the end of May 2025, not only symbolizes the culmination of months of intense research, writing, and revision but also represents a major step forward toward the ultimate objective of completing the entire PhD program.

Throughout this semester, the doctoral candidates demonstrated remarkable dedication and resilience, especially considering the unique challenges that the academic environment has faced in recent years. One of the notable adaptations was the administration of examinations online. The shift to virtual assessments required students to quickly familiarize themselves with digital platforms and adjust their study habits accordingly. Despite these changes, the students performed admirably, successfully navigating the complexities of remote learning and testing without compromising their academic standards.

As the semester progressed, students also began preparing for the final phase of their doctoral studies, the eighth and concluding semester of the program, which is scheduled to commence after the summer vacation. This period of preparation involved organizing research data, refining their dissertations, and planning the final steps needed to meet the program's rigorous requirements. The sense of anticipation and motivation was palpable among the students, many of whom expressed a deep sense of satisfaction and happiness about reaching this critical juncture. Completing the seventh semester and defending a dissertation chapter was viewed as a landmark

achievement—one that brought them significantly closer to the completion of their PhD degrees.

Faculty members at Karabuk University were equally invested in the success of their students throughout this semester. Professors extended their heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to the doctoral candidates for the extraordinary effort and dedication they demonstrated in their scholarly work. They recognized the students' ability to produce high-quality research under demanding conditions and commended the intellectual rigor evident in their dissertation chapters. The professors also took the opportunity to encourage the students to maintain their momentum as they move forward into the final semester of the program.

In their motivational addresses, faculty members emphasized the importance of perseverance and focus during the concluding stages of the PhD journey. They reminded students that the completion of the dissertation and the successful defense of the entire body of work are critical milestones that require sustained effort and careful attention to detail. The professors highlighted that the university's doctoral program allows students to defend their dissertations at the end of the eighth semester, after completing a total of four academic years. This flexible timeline provides students with the opportunity to thoroughly finalize their research while also encouraging timely completion of their degrees.

The collaborative relationship between students and faculty has been a cornerstone of the program's success. The professors' ongoing support, guidance, and constructive feedback have played a crucial role in helping students overcome research challenges and refine their academic writing. Many students expressed their sincere appreciation for this mentorship and acknowledged that the faculty's engagement significantly contributed to their academic growth and the quality of their dissertations.

On their part, the students conveyed their gratitude to the professors for their unwavering support throughout the semester. They recognized the importance of the faculty's continuous follow-up and constructive criticism in shaping their research projects and helping them achieve this notable milestone. The students wished their professors all the best, reflecting a mutual respect and strong sense of community within the academic environment.

Looking ahead, the upcoming eighth semester promises to be an intense yet rewarding period for the doctoral candidates. It will involve the finalization of their dissertations, incorporating feedback from advisors, and preparing for the formal defense before a committee of experts. This final phase requires meticulous attention to detail, rigorous review, and the ability to communicate research findings effectively.

In addition to academic preparation, students will also need to manage the emotional and psychological aspects of concluding a demanding multi-year program. The transition from being doctoral candidates to becoming PhD graduates is a significant personal achievement, often accompanied by a mix of excitement, relief, and sometimes anxiety about future career paths. The university's academic advisors and student support services are expected to play a vital role in helping students navigate this transition smoothly.

Overall, the seventh semester at Karabuk University stands as a testament to the resilience, dedication, and scholarly excellence of the PhD students and the supportive academic environment fostered by the faculty. As these students approach the final stages of their doctoral journey, the university community remains committed to celebrating their achievements and supporting their successful completion of the program. The milestone of defending their dissertation chapter not only marks a moment of accomplishment but also sets the stage for the final push toward attaining their doctoral degrees – an achievement that will open new horizons for their academic and professional futures.



## End of Semester VIII

Following a 4-year journey in their PhD program, Yusif, Ridha, Aymen, Lina, Sarmad, and Abdullah – realized that they are standing on the threshold of a long-awaited milestone. With only a week or two remaining before their dissertation defenses, an unexpected sense of calm began to settle over them. The end of their demanding academic journey, once distant and uncertain, had finally begun to approach its end.

For the first time in years, the weight of deadlines, research challenges, late-night discussions, and countless revisions seemed to grow lighter. Graduation, which had long felt like a dream, now appeared just within reach.

The next day at Karabuk University, the moment of truth arrived for Yusif. After years of unwavering commitment to his research, he stood before the examination committee to defend his dissertation. His friends were watching anxiously, silently hoping for the best. When Yusif finally stepped out with a relieved smile and the news of his successful defense, the group erupted in joy, expressing sincere congratulations.

One by one, in the days that followed, each of them faced their own defense. Ridha's thoughtful explanations, Aymen's confident delivery, Lina's passionate presentation, Sarmad's meticulous analysis, and Abdullah's insightful responses all earned well-deserved praise.

Each successful defense added another layer of excitement and disbelief. They had all completed the long program successfully. What once seemed like an endless path filled with obstacles had transformed into a celebration of achievement. Their dreams – nurtured through effort, perseverance, and mutual support – had finally come true.

This collective triumph meant more than just the awarding of degrees. It represented years of shared experiences: encouraging each other through difficult experiments, providing feedback on draft chapters, debating theories over coffee, and finding moments of laughter during stressful times. Their success was a testament to the strength of their friendship and the relentless determination that each of them had displayed.

As they celebrated, the friends exchanged heartfelt congratulations. Yet beneath the joy, there was a quiet sadness. They came from different countries, and the bittersweet reality was that their paths might soon diverge.

None of them could be certain when – or even if – they would all meet again. Still, they promised to stay in touch, and they held tightly to the memories of the extraordinary journey they had completed together. The stories they created, the challenges they overcame, and the days they spent studying side by side would remain with them forever.

At the end of their journey, all friends visited the office of their beloved Professor A. Serdar Öztürk. He had guided them patiently throughout the program, offering wisdom, encouragement, and steady support whenever they faced uncertainty.

Standing together in his office, they expressed their deep gratitude for his mentorship, acknowledging the crucial role he had played in shaping their academic and personal growth. They extended their warmest wishes to him and to all the other professors who had supported them along the way.

With their dissertations defended and their hearts full, the friends stepped into the next chapters of their lives – grateful, accomplished, and forever connected by the unforgettable journey they had shared.



