



UPM Won Asia Pacific 3MT Competition

On 27th September, Brisbane, Australia, Yasmin Mustapha Kamil, a PhD student from UPM, represented Malaysia and participated in Asia Pacific Three Minutes Thesis Competition (3MT). She beat 60 candidates from other countries of the region and won the Winner and People's Choice of the competition. This issue of the newsletter gives you chance to understand Yasmin.

Springer Nature: **SN** Yasmin: **Y**

SN: Can you introduce yourself?

Y: Hi. I'm Yasmin Mustapha Kamil, an ordinary girl from Bandar Baru Bangi. For the past couple of years, I've been working on an optical based sensor for dengue in the Faculty of Engineering at Universiti Putra Malaysia. The project was supervised by Associate Professor Muhammad Hafiz Abu Bakar. Alhamdulillah, I managed to cover the fundamental concepts of the work which earned me a doctorate degree in Biomedical Engineering just in November. I would consider the laboratory as my second home. Sometimes you would find me at a badminton court or the basketball court to de-stress myself; or at home playing piano.

I like cats. If I have the time to write a book, I'm sure that the first book authored by me would be about my cats. Food is a necessity, and thank God is also among the things I appreciate most in life. My favourites are simply anything spicy. What I do not like would be bad smells as I have a sensitive nose.

SN: Why did you join 3MT? What are the motivations behind your participation?

Y: The person who introduced me to the 3MT competition during the faculty stage was my co-supervisor, Professor Mohd Adzir Mahdi. He was the one who urged me to join the competition and thought that it would be a great addition to my experience. Another reason that made me want to participate was to get some practice on my presentation skills before my viva. To be honest, moments before presenting in front of a crowd are among the moments I dread the most. The anticipation makes a second feel like a year, and I guess the only way to shake that off is with practice.

SN: What are the difficulties you faced in the whole 3MT process? And how did you overcome the difficulties?

Y: For one thing, squeezing your 4 years' worth of research in 3 minutes was not easy. But I'm grateful to have great teachers around me who guided me on what and what not to include. For example, my supervisors were awesome at advising me what to put for my 1 slide presentation. It was Dr. Muhammad Hafiz's idea to make it look a bit comical, so that the audience can easily digest what it was about. Prof. Adzir on the other hand gave a few ideas on how to start the speech by giving me links to past winners' presentations. But ultimately, I guess what's important is to tailor your speech in a way that when the audience leave the hall later that day after hearing your speech

(and others), they can still remember what yours was all about, such as the motivation behind your work and what you're aiming to do. Thanks Datin Dr Mardziah helped me with the content of my speech, on what to include, and how to convey them in a way that is easy on the audience.

Apart from that, for a soft-spoken girl like me, I also had difficulties in projecting my voice. But again, coaches which UPM provided for me (Datin Dr. Mardziah, Prof. Noraini, Dr. Norita, and the past winner, Mr. Ashwin Charles) were superb! They really helped me improve my writing and delivery skills.

SN: What have you learnt from the Asia Pacific 3MT in Brisbane?

Y: The audience during the competition in Brisbane were very supportive. I remember coming out of the hall during the semi-finals, and I had local students from UQ coming up to me and telling me how they loved my speech and my work. Some even took down my contact to know more about my research and shared opinions on how I can improve. I would like to think that this culture is good to practice in the academia field, so that researchers are motivated to continue their work.

Also, the keynote speech from Springer Nature was very informative. The speaker gave tips on how to draft your article for publication. One tip which I liked was to make sure that the language you use is easy to understand. Most of us were brought up with the notion that scientific writing has to have a certain degree of 'seriousness' in order to achieve the gold standard of a proper scientific writing. However, sometimes, this serious tone doesn't come across as easily as how we would like it to, which makes the whole article not only tough to understand but difficult to read to the end. Instead, our writing should be easy on the readers. Sentences should be straight to the point and the flow of the writing needs to be seamless.

SN: What advices you will give to the next 3MT participants from UPM?

Y: Be genuine. Your character plays a huge role as well. By being yourself, your speech will sound more natural and convincing. Another tip is to not be intimidated by the complexity of your project's principle and exclude it out from your speech. Instead, try to find a way to explain this point using an analogy. Its really important to include this part in your work, because people would want to know. And if you can explain it in a way where the audience can picture what you're saying in their minds, the trophy is definitely yours to take.