



Soad El-Rgaig

Tibra Spotlight, October 2003
by Soad El-Rgaig

*"Strong-willed, studious, ambitious, and a very warm girl, this is how I describe Soad in few words... Soad's hard work and amazing determination for success will lead her to achieve her goals and establish a successful career as a prominent Libyan linguist. Here is Soad's story in her own words."-Shuhub Al-Janabi**

I am the youngest in my family and since my early childhood, I had big dreams and great expectations. Luckily, I was blessed with a wonderful father, my rock, who treated me like a princess and encouraged me to follow my dreams. He always had faith and trust in me and that made me want to be the best person I can possibly be. Since I was a little girl, he taught me to be strong, speak my mind, and be proud of who I am. That gave me the strength and the will to follow my dreams.

I remember since I was ten or eleven years old, I used to scribble the following excerpt, I read somewhere, on my school books and notes: **"I will never surrender, I will never give up, I will follow my dreams, I will fight for them, until I achieve them or die like a hero."** I was not then fully aware of the grand challenges and hardship I would face later in pursuing my dreams. But even if I had been aware of them, would that have had any impact on my choice? I strongly doubt it.



*My wonderful father,
my rock.*

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In 1995, after I had earned a B.A. degree from Garyounis University in Benghazi, my father agreed to send me to the UK for one year to pursue a Master's degree. I arrived in London three months late for my course, due to visa formalities. It was too late for me to join the course, so I was faced with two choices: Pack and head home empty handed, or get my act together and face the music, which I decided to do. Right away, I had to find a source of income as the money I had brought with me was running out. It is London, terribly expensive and what I had was only enough for one year. I managed to secure a job in a florist shop and enrolled in an IT course to improve my computer skills.

The following year, 1996, I started studying for my first Master's degree and found a better job in a booking agency. In the mornings, I had lectures to attend, in the evenings, I was working late shifts. It was pretty hard working late long hours and at the same time preparing for exams and deadlines. But I managed. The year after, I got a good job in an Arab TV channel in London as a weather producer/presenter. I finished my MA in translation and worked as a freelance translator and interpreter for a while. Then, I started a part-time degree in Chinese language, but after two years I decided to defer that and pursue a second Master's in applied linguistics‡.



With my Canadian friend Heather

At the present time, I work in a leading company as a translator, teach occasionally and work on a Ph.D. in sociolinguistics. My areas of interest include language and gender, critical discourse analysis, miscommunication in cross-cultural settings, conversation analysis, aphasia, dyslexia, and bilingualism. I m also working on various projects, some directly related to sociolinguistics, others to linguistics in general. One of my main projects is establishing the **Society for Libyan**

Linguists, in cooperation with some Libyan academics specialised in linguistics. Membership in the Society will be open to those who are studying or already hold a degree in linguistics. We are planning to carry out and encourage various projects in Libya related to the different branches of linguistics, such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, phonetics, and others.

I have so many plans for the future; I want to finish my degree in Chinese and spend a year in China; I want to travel around the world; I want to form, hopefully in Libya, an international institute for languages that teaches languages from all over the world. And I m still hoping that I can dedicate more time to writing.

The burning passion for learning has kept me going for years. It gave me a tremendous strength to endure hardship and homesickness. There are no words in any language that can describe the pain, the sleepless nights, the everlasting nostalgia for my family, home, cousins, and childhood friends. My gratitude and appreciation to my beloved family is immeasurable. I attribute my success and achievements to their unconditional love, sincere encouragement, and soothing compliments. I thank them for giving me this golden opportunity to prove myself and prove to others that young Libyan women are capable of creating a mosaic of success even without patriarchal guardianship or filial hegemony.

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‡ *Linguistics is the scientific study of human natural languages. It covers a wide range of topics and its boundaries are difficult to define. Linguists try to answer the basic questions, 'what is language?', and 'how does language work?' They probe into various aspects, such as common features and variations among languages, differences between human language and animal communication, how children learn to speak, how one does write down and analyse an unwritten language, why languages change, and so on. Here are some of the main branches of linguistics:*

- *Phonetics: the study of human speech sounds*
- *Phonology: sound patterning*
- *Syntax: grammar*
- *Pragmatics: deals with how speakers use language in ways that cannot be predicted from linguistic knowledge alone*
- *Psycholinguistics: the study of language and mind*
- *Sociolinguistics: the study of language and society*
- *Applied Linguistics: the application of linguistics to language teaching*
- *Computational Linguistic: the use of computers to stimulate language and its workings*
- *Stylistics: the study of language and literature*
- *Anthropological Linguistics: the study of language in cross-cultural settings*
- *Philosophical Linguistics: the link between language and logical thinking*

**Mrs. Al-Janabi, an Iraqi friend of Soad's, introduced her and highly recommended Ms. El-Rgaig for the feature.*