

# Heba Arafah, PhD, TESOL Certified

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**Citizenship:** U.S. and Jordanian | **Languages:** English (Native), Arabic (Native)

## PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Bilingual, TESOL-certified applied linguist with over a decade of international experience in teaching, program management, humanitarian work, and AI localization and training data development. Adept at cross-cultural communication, global collaboration, and interdisciplinary problem-solving in high-stakes environments.

### Achievements:

- Influenced culturally adapted Arabic NLU features for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market through linguistic expertise and cross-functional collaboration at Amazon Alexa AI.
- Tripled student enrollment in Arabic language courses during the pandemic by launching targeted outreach and digital engagement strategies.
- Managed refugee resettlement referrals for 447 refugee individuals, advocating for urgent medical cases and optimizing outcomes through structured case management.

## EDUCATION

University of London, Birkbeck College – London, United Kingdom Dec 2020

### PhD in Applied Linguistics & Communication

Thesis: **Multilinguals' Language Choices and Perception in the UK in Light of the Brexit Referendum**

Jordan University of Science and Technology – Irbid, Jordan Feb 2006

### Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

Thesis: **An Experimental Socio-Phonetic Study of Language Variation in Jordanian Arabic**

Jordan University of Science and Technology – Irbid, Jordan June 2003

### Bachelor of Arts in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Linguistics

## WORK EXPERIENCE

**PhD Lecturer | Royal Academy for Culinary Arts (RACA) | Amman, Jordan**

July 2025 – Present

- Teach Applied English and Business Communication courses using interactive methods to build fluency, comprehension, cross-cultural competence, and professional communication skills.
- Leverage Learning Management Systems (LMS) and digital tools to enhance student engagement in classroom.

**Resettlement Associate | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) | Amman, Jordan**

Mar 2024 – Dec 2024

- Assessed and processed resettlement cases for 447 individuals through in-person and remote interviews.
- Prepared and submitted over 80 resettlement referrals to resettlement countries, applying case management best practices to optimize case outcomes in alignment with country-specific criteria.
- Coordinated cross-functional communication and follow-up with internal teams to address the physical, legal, and medical needs of persons of concern, ensuring case resolution.
- Advocated for high-priority medical resettlement cases, driving urgent interventions and managing follow-ups to ensure swift processing, protection, and care for individuals in critical situations.

## **Machine Learning Data Linguist II (Scrum Lead) | Amazon Alexa AI | Massachusetts, USA**

Nov 2021 – Sept 2023

- Led a team of six data linguists as scrum lead, facilitating daily standups, removing blockers, and implementing process improvements.
- Localized and linguistically refined training data and product features, ensuring grammatical accuracy and natural language flow to support effective model training and Arabic NLU development.
- Advised cross-functional teams on regional language use and cultural norms, shaping feature design and enhancing product-market fit for Arabic-speaking in the GCC market.
- Refined localization workflows by providing structured feedback and linguistic quality assurance (QA), leading to sustained improvements in vendor performance and reduced rework for Arabic NLU content.

## **Arabic Studies Coordinator & Lecturer | Mount Holyoke College | Massachusetts, USA**

July 2010 - Aug 2016; July 2018 – June 2019; July 2020 - Aug 2021

- Spearheaded an outreach campaign that increased Arabic program enrollment by 3x during remote learning, utilizing social media and direct communication to sustain interest and participation.
- Led the Arabic Studies Program, designing a dynamic curriculum and leveraging Learning Management Systems (LMS), visual storytelling, and digital tools (Wacom tablet, PowerPoint annotations) to enhance student engagement in both in-person and online formats.
- Designed and taught Arabic courses across the Five College Consortium, applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) strategies and interactive techniques to enhance fluency, comprehension, and real-world language use.
- Led three teaching assistants and three student assistants, fostering a collaborative learning environment that supported student development.
- Served as external examiner for Levantine Arabic for the Five College Center for the Study of World Languages, evaluating students' language proficiency and providing feedback to support program improvement.

## **Interim Director of Five College Arabic Initiative | Five Colleges Incorporated | Massachusetts, USA**

Jan 2019 – June 2019 (concurrent with faculty role, directorial assignment)

- Led the Five College Arabic Language Initiative, coordinating course offerings, faculty, and cultural programming across Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and UMass Amherst, resulting in enhanced cross-campus collaboration and student engagement.
- Implemented a cost-control strategy that eliminated budget overruns by equitably distributing funds across five campuses, encouraging interdepartmental collaboration, and securing additional funding where needed.
- Supervised and mentored a team of five lecturers, ensuring high-quality standards and appropriate articulation of objectives in course syllabi.

## **Director of Language Assistant Program | Mount Holyoke College | Massachusetts, USA**

Sept 2013 – June 2014 (concurrent with faculty role, directorial assignment)

- Established the foundational structure of a new Language Assistant Program, conducting faculty consultations, developing training workshops, and overseeing payroll logistics to ensure smooth operations.

## **CERTIFICATES & AWARDS**

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World TESOL Academy – Online (2025)

**TEFL/ TESOL Certificate**

Fulbright – University of Massachusetts – Amherst, Massachusetts (2006 – 2007)

**Fulbright Language Teaching Assistantship**

## **CORE SKILLS**

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Curriculum Design | Instructional Delivery | Assessment & Feedback | Language Teaching | Learning Management Systems (Moodle, Canvas, Blackboard) | Intercultural Communication | Cultural Consulting | Agile Scrum | Microsoft Office | Natural Language Understanding (NLU) | Arabic-English Localization | Research | Data Collection & Analysis | SPSS