Using An English Teaching Package to Promote Resilience and Enhance English Literacy Among Rohingya Young Adults in the Cox's Bazaar Refugee Camp

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Yuka KATO 09 April 2024



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ABSTRACT

Prodip and Garnett (2019), among other scholars, have identified the pressing need for education in emergencies, focusing on the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. Some studies (Segupta, 2020; Imtiaz, 2023; Siegfried, 2022) have examined the resilience of the Rohingya in terms of socio-economic and climate issues, but not in educational contexts. They also highlight the lack of literature on resilience and English language education in Myanmar and suggest that further investigations could explore the complex linguistic background of the Rohingya. As an attempt to contribute to this literature, a mixed-methods two-part study was conducted in this project. In the first part, a self-designed online questionnaire distributed through convenience sampling was utilised to survey the English reading and writing habits of around 80 Rohingya young adults, followed by ten semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the Rohingya wanted to improve their English literacy but were unable to do so due to the lack of resources. In the second part, a teaching package was developed to address their English learning needs and assess their resilience in the learning process. Though limited data was obtained, the teaching package provided insight into the learning habits of the Rohingya. The study hopes to raise awareness of the Rohingya refugee crisis and invite more research and contributions toward education for refugees.

Keywords: community-based research, Rohingya refugees, English language learning, education in emergencies



INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya, a Muslim minority in Myanmar, have faced persecution for decades (May & Brooke, 2014; Green, MacManus, & de la Cour Venning, 2015). The role of the English language in Myanmar changed with the country's history during and after the British colonisation (Fen, 2005; Holliday, 2012; Lwin, 2000, as cited in Phyu & Loftie, 2016). Public schools in Myanmar have Burmese as the medium of instruction and English became a part of the Burmese curriculum in the 1970s (Wong, 2005). There was concern that the Burmese military targeted the Rohingya for not only their religion and ethnicity but also their language (Cultural Survival, 2022). With the 2021 Myanmar coup d'etat, the oppressed Rohingya are once again receiving media attention from Myanmar people and the international community. Research shows the resilience of the Rohingya in the face of various socio-economic and climate challenges (Cultural Survival, 2022; Imtiaz, 2023; Shohel, 2022; Siegfried, 2022; Sengupta, 2020). They also highlight the lack of literature on resilience and English language education in Myanmar and suggest that further investigations could explore the complex linguistic background of the Rohingya. As an attempt to contribute to this limited literature, a mixed-methods two-part study will be conducted in this project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language in the Rohingya community

Many Rohingya people were denied education in Myanmar, but those who went to public school had to learn Burmese. There was concern that the Burmese military targeted the Rohingya for not only their religion and ethnicity but also their language as the military removed Rohingya



from the state language and public media (Ali, 2021). Nonetheless, the Rohingya continue to speak the Rohingya language in their community and many learn English for academic and work purposes (Sankaran, Ganapathy, & Lin, 2019). Over the past few years, humanitarian intervention from various parties has provided the Rohingya with English language education (Digital Learning Associates, 2019). Examining the case of education for the Rohingya in the Bangladesh refugee camps, they may also have language barriers because the Rohingya would have to learn English, Bangla, or other languages to learn, teach, and communicate in Bangladesh (Shohel, 2022). Since the intervention usually comes from outside, studies (see Laxton et al., 2021; Yasin et. al. 2016) have emphasised the importance of using local voices to inform the curriculum design of the education the refugees receive. This project has aimed to collect the opinions of the target population in the first part of the study.

The Resilience of The Rohingya

Education in emergencies involves several factors that need attention such as learning space, teaching staff, resources, and psycho-social, cultural, and political issues; the lack of relevant and quality education can result in early marriage, forced labour, or social or economic exclusion (UNHCR, 2021). For instance, Rohingya girls would often discontinue their education or not be enrolled in school in the first place to avoid interacting with men as conservative Muslim customs dictate (Bakali & Shujaat, 2020, Save the Children, 2017, as cited in Shohel, 2022). The conservative nature of the Rohingya could prevent data collection. However, collaborative and participatory community-based approaches, such as the project by Hoque, Ahmad, Manzur, and Prova (2023), have ensured respectful and effective research. This study will follow Hoque et al.'s example to ensure the success of the project.



Resilience is the ability to successfully adapt, endure, or achieve positive outcomes in the face of challenging or threatening circumstances; it is usually used for describing people who have been or currently are at high risk or facing stress or trauma (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). Despite obstacles, the Rohingya community continues to pursue their goals and demonstrate resilience. Segupta (2020) studied the resilience of Rohingya women who were incarcerated in India. A study by Imtiaz (2023) measures the resilience of the Rohingya in facing climate issues. Siegfried (2022) reported an inspirational story on Rohingya young adults working passionately toward climate change awareness in the Bangladesh refugee camps although the environment is but one of the major concerns in their long-suffering lives. A study by Phyu and Loftie (2016) examining the English adjective usage of Rohingya bloggers is one of the limited literature on English language education in Myanmar. Given this context, this capstone project aims to implement an English teaching package that will promote learning and resilience among Rohingya youth. Oshio, Kaneko, Nagamine, and Nakaya (2003) constructed an Adolescent Resilience Scale in 2002 with the coefficient alpha of the total score being 0.85; it examined over 200 Japanese undergraduate students with a median age of 20.2 years in terms of Novelty Seeking, Emotional Regulation, and Positive Future Orientation. In this study, the same scale will be administered to Rohingya youths of similar age.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The English proficiency of the Rohingya youth is expected to improve after the series of workshops. Their resilience, particularly related to independent learning and motivation, is also anticipated to be reaffirmed through this learning experience.



METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods survey was conducted with approximately 80 young Rohingya adults in the first part of the study. An online questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed via social media platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp) to reach a wider audience of Rohingya youth. It consisted of four sections, namely demographics (5 items), English learning experience (7 multiple-choice items), attitudes towards English usage (14 Likert-scale items), and open response (2 items). Ten follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted approximately one week after the survey. Informed consent was obtained from the participants and the collaborating organisation, the Rohingya Youth Advocacy Network (RYAN). The one-hour interviews consisted of questions derived from the online survey. The results suggested that Rohingya youth are generally confident in their English reading and writing abilities, and view English as a valuable resource for both social and work-related purposes.

To meet the learning needs of young Rohingya adults, we implemented a teaching package during the second half of the project. Around eighty individuals were invited to attend a series of eight online English enhancement workshops through convenience sampling on social media platforms Instagram and WhatsApp. The teaching package was based on the Intensive Business English course offered by the Arthur Samy Language Learning Centre of the Education University of Hong Kong (Appendix 2). After using other sources to adapt the course content, the effectiveness of the teaching package was tested through two-hour synchronous Zoom workshops conducted from November 2023 to January 2024 by the researcher. Over time, the final number of participants narrowed down to 18.

The effectiveness of the training package was assessed through the review of participants' attendance and participation records. The well-established Adolescent Resilience Scale



developed by Oshio et al. (2003) was used to assess the resilience of young Rohingya adults (Appendix 3). Proficiency in Business English was evaluated using the online Cambridge English language assessment (Appendix 4). The assessments are administered before and after the series of workshops. The RYAN will provide a certificate of completion at the end.

RESULTS

The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 28.0 (IBM Corp., 2021). Data cleaning narrowed the sample down to 15 male participants.

Variable	Туре	Mean	S.D.	F	df	Sig	Partial eta squared
Overall	pre-intervention	7.52	2.602				
Resilience	post-intervention	7.76	2.767	1.592	1.000	0.243	.166
Novelty	pre-intervention	8.14	2.059				
Seeking	post-intervention	8.79	1.894	4.353	1.000	0.056	.237
Emotional	pre-intervention	6.42	2.955				
Regulation	post-intervention	6.13	3.053	.000	.005	0.332	.000
Positive Future	pre-intervention	8.611	1.708				
Orientation	post-intervention	9.11	1.616	1.816	1.000	0.199	.115
English	pre-intervention	17.36 (B2)	6.957				
proficiency	post-intervention	20.36 (C1)	6.356	2.824	1.000	0.117	.178

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Business English Assessment Online Quiz and AdolescentResilience Scale Survey results

Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics and within-subjects effects of the data collected. The results showed that the English teaching package did not have a statistical significance on the English abilities of the participants (p-value = 0.117). The results from the Resilience Scale



analysed as a whole by taking the average score of the 21 items had no statistical significance either (p-value = 0.243). They were also analysed in their sections: Novelty Seeking, Emotional Regulation, and Positive Future Orientation. The participants had a high level of resilience (7-8 out of 10) before and after the intervention, scoring highest in Positive Future Orientation (9) and lowest in Emotional Regulation (6).

In addition to using Zoom, the researcher integrated other digital technologies to improve productivity (e.g., streamlining tasks, and optimizing workflow) so an online Learning Management System (LMS) was created. Participants needed additional support due to technical issues and various personal circumstances so every session was recorded and shared (Image 1). The researcher created study groups not only to establish professional boundaries with the participants but also to encourage cooperative learning through peer support (Image 2). During the Zoom sessions, they would need step-by-step videos of how to complete the task they needed to complete each week and submit it to the LMS (Image 3). The researcher also followed up with WhatsApp group messages to investigate the reasons behind low participant engagement (Image 4). This was addressed by providing detailed feedback on the work of each participant (Image 5).

While the majority of participants were not equipped with basic digital literacy skills, some of them appeared more proficient since they used AI-generated responses to answer questions during the workshops and in their task submissions. The researcher attempted to limit the usage of AI by giving repeated warnings through WhatsApp (Image 6) and during Zoom sessions (Image 7).



DISCUSSION

This section discusses the potential reasons for the data obtained and the implications this has for further studies.

Difference in demographics

A sizeable proportion, if not whole, of the research sample is likely to consist of males, which can result in a biased perspective of the Rohingya. The limited social media presence of Rohingya females and their conservative culture made it difficult to reach this population and involve them in the study. The lack of female participants might have skewed the results regarding resilience scores since their background could either decrease - due to societal pressure not to undergo education (Bakali &Shujaat, 2020) - or increase the resilience score - due to their intrinsic motivation.

Underlying assumptions

Based on observation of their social media, the participants were assumed to have basic digital skills and know how to use Zoom to join webinars. However, a Zoom workshop or classroom required more interaction from the attendees and the online interactive design of the workshop series did not have the intended positive impact as participants did not understand instructions on how to create an account on the LMS and submit tasks in an appropriate and timely manner. As Iqbal et al. (2022) had identified, there were language and cultural barriers that interfered with data collection in this project. Despite assurances from the collaborating organization, RYAN, regarding participants' English proficiency, the language barrier emerged as a primary



obstacle. In some instances, assistance from a few students with English proficiency was necessary to facilitate content translation into Rohingya. This highlights the underestimation of the language barrier's impact despite participants' self-reported English fluency.

Sociodynamics of the 'classroom'

The initial classroom environment aimed to create student perceptions of the instructor similar to those held towards university professors: approachable and deserving of respect. However, participants disregarded established communication protocols and course expectations, opting for informal channels like WhatsApp outside working hours and turning in tasks late. With no readily apparent alternative, the researcher was compelled to reinforce the student-teacher dynamic and professional boundaries inherent in the teaching role. These established boundaries were not very effective as they also limited the development of deeper connections with most students, resulting in positive relationships primarily confined to a smaller subset.

Choice of pedagogical methods

The course materials, adapted from the Arthur Samy Language Learning Centre's curriculum, proved inappropriate and necessitated adjustments to accommodate the learners' language level. The complexity of certain topics, such as interviewing, CV writing, cover letter drafting, and analytical skills, required more time than initially anticipated. This exceeded the planned one session per topic allocation, impacting the overall pace of the program. While RYAN initially committed to conducting post-session reviews in Rohingya, these sessions were not held, further limiting comprehension.



The online mode of teaching and learning had several limitations as well, including how the researcher can effectively demonstrate how to complete tasks and provide feedback. For instance, Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis states that input and input alone drives language development. However, this has long been debunked by theories from other scholars such as Schmidt (1990, 2001) who proposed that learning takes place when it is noticed. Even with detailed feedback provided, the learning methods of the participants and the limited time frame prevented visible improvement in their productive skills (speaking and writing). Consultation sessions were offered but not utilised as learning motivation appeared to be low among the participants. In terms of using technology in pedagogy, tertiary education institutions are now developing "AI declaration statements" to ensure that learners do not abuse AI tools in their assignments; this method would be ineffective since the Rohingya participants were generally honest but appeared to be impassive, lax learners.

Additionally, the differences in varieties of English used by the researcher and the participants should be considered. Interview data together with the researcher's observations show that not all participants received formal education in English and many of them used a variety that was close to Indian English, while the researcher received formal education in English and used both American and British English. Therefore, the corrective feedback the researcher gave concerning their English language usage may not address the learning needs of the Rohingya youths.

Choice of measures

Oshio et al.'s Adolescence Resilience Scale (2003) was inapplicable to the situation of the Rohingya youths as the initial study was conducted among Japanese undergraduates. Furthermore, the English assessment used is a multiple-choice quiz on diction, and grammar and



follows the British or European standard of language proficiency, which did not consider some of the course objectives and may not accurately reflect the actual proficiency of the participants.

Implications

While the high level of Rohingya adolescent resilience found in this study echoes previous research (Segupta, 2020; Imtiaz, 2023; Siegfried, 2022), the scores could be inflated due to social desirability bias. The statistical insignificance suggests that other scales or mixed methods should be explored to give a more nuanced perspective on the Rohingya.

Reflection on the encountered challenges reveals that factors beyond the program's scope likely played a role. The researcher was not well-equipped to conduct education in emergencies since the refugees' living conditions and limited access to education and work opportunities might have impacted their motivation and ability to utilize the acquired skills in practical settings. Therefore, the instructor or researcher needs to be equipped with not only intercultural competence but also cultural sensitivity to navigate this context (Iqbal et al., 2022). Monetary incentives and bridges to further studies can address the participants' basic needs and desire for supplementary education.

Furthermore, differences in second language acquisition and pedagogical methods in the virtual classroom from the face-to-face classroom should be taken into account for more effective sharing and learning. The limited digital literacy of the participants might have been exacerbated by the complexity of the online platform and the lack of in-person support, ultimately hindering their ability to engage with the learning materials. The collaborative teaching practices that Hoque et al. (2023) mentioned had limited influence in this setting. Even after giving feedback, the participants did not appear to notice the areas needing improvement because such methods



need more time and attention to be given on an individual basis. Despite challenges, the act of participating in the program itself demonstrates a degree of initiative and self-efficacy. The program content, even if not fully grasped, might have introduced participants to new concepts or resources which could spark curiosity and a desire to learn more, contributing to a positive future orientation. Although the complexity of the online platform might have posed challenges, some participants did demonstrate a basic level of digital literacy that could be beneficial in the future. Funding research could help the researcher conduct face-to-face lessons which would significantly enhance teaching and learning with this population.

CONCLUSION

The English teaching package had no statistically significant impact on the resilience and English proficiency of the Rohingya youth. Several issues arose during the implementation of the teaching package due to various factors such as optimistic assumptions made during planning, trusting participants' perceived level of English, and the socio-cultural and geographical distance between the participants and the researcher. The complex interrelation of these factors likely influenced the learning motivation and resilience of the participants. To promote empathy and understanding in the Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) community, educators not limited to the English language teaching community can draw insights on how to support the education of the displaced Rohingya, in terms of teacher training, curriculum design, lesson planning, and implementation of learning interventions in minority communities.



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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Information

Thank you for participating in this research. The research is conducted by KATO Yuka, a student from the Education University of Hong Kong under the Faculty of Education and Human Development and Department of Psychology.

Introduction of the research

The Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar are a marginalised Muslim community that has been deprived of their human rights by the Burmese military for several years. With the 2021 Myanmar coup d'état, the oppressed Rohingya are once again receiving media attention. purpose of this study is to explore the English reading and writing habits of Rohingya young adults in the Bangladesh refugee camp and whether their English linguistic knowledge has any impact on their quality of life.

Method

The questionnaire for this study contains four sections. You will first fill in your basic information in section A. In section B, you will answer multiple choice questions about how you studied English and your habits of using English reading and writing. In section C, you will read fourteen statements about using English reading and writing during politically unstable situations, and you will rate how you feel about the statements on a scale from 1(lowest degree) to 5 (highest degree). Section D contains two open response questions. There are no right or wrong answers, as only your own thoughts matter.

Potential risks of the research



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This research does not have any potential risk. You have the right to withdraw this research at any time without any negative consequences. The study only collects personal information that is essential to the research. Moreover, all your personal information will be confidential, with access provided only to the investigator and authorised staff. It will be deleted after the project is completed.

If you have any concern, please contact KATO Yuka at

Do you agree to join the present survey?

Yes

No

Section A

What is your age (in years)?

- < 18 •
- 18 22
- 22 30
- > 30

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say.

What is your level of education?

- Did not attend school.
- Kindergarten
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3



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- Grade 4
- Grade 5 •
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- Grade 9
- Grade 10
- others •

What is your job?

- Student •
- working
- Others •

What is your Income level? *

<u>Section B</u>

How did you study English?

- **Religious School** _
- Private tutorials -
- Self-study, e.g., reading on your own, watching YouTube. -
- other _

When did you start studying English?

- Less than 1 year ago
- 1-2 years ago •
- 2-4 years ago •
- More than 4 years ago •

For what purposes do you use your English skills? (you can choose more than one)



- Personal communication
- Studies
- Work
- others:

How often do you read in English?

- Daily (almost every day)
- Weekly (a few times a week)
- Monthly (a few times in a month)
- Not sure

What kind of English texts do you usually read? (you can choose more than one)

- novels
- poetry
- Magazines
- Cartoons/ comic books
- News articles/ newspapers
- Encyclopaedias
- Atlases
- textbooks
- Academic journals
- Others:

How often do you use English for writing?

- Daily (almost every day)
- Weekly (a few times a week)
- Monthly (a few times in a month)
- Not sure

What kind of English texts do you usually write? (you can choose more than one)



- Novels
- journalism
- Persuasive essays
- Descriptive Writing
- Some textbooks
- Academic writing
- Diary Writing
- Business Writing
- Poetry
- Critical Writing e.g., Film reviews, Game reviews, Music reviews
- Scientific Writing
- Travel Writing
- Blogging

<u>Section C</u>

Likert - not confident 1-10 very confident

- How confident do you feel about your English skills in general?
- How confident do you feel about your English reading skills?
- How confident do you feel about using your English reading skills to help people in the Rohingya community?
- How confident do you feel about your English writing skills?
- How confident do you feel about using your English writing skills to help people in the Rohingya community?

Likert - not at all 1-10 absolutely

- Is learning English important for people in the Rohingya community?
- Has knowing how to read English helped you academically since February 2021?
- Has knowing how to read English helped you socially since February 2021?
- Has knowing how to read English helped you financially since February 2021?
- Has knowing how to write English helped you academically since February 2021?
- Has knowing how to write English helped you socially since February 2021?



- Has knowing how to write English helped you financially since February 2021?
- Would you like to learn how to use English reading more effectively in the future?
- Would you like to learn how to use English writing more effectively in the future?

Likert - agree-neutral-disagree-not sure.

- I often read news about people in the Rohingya community in English.
- I like reading news about people in the Rohingya community in English.
- I often write about people in the Rohingya community in English.
- I like writing about people in the Rohingya community in English]

Section D

Why has knowing English helped/ not helped you since February 2021? *

Do you have any questions? *

Please leave your contact information for a follow-up interview. [WhatsApp, Instagram, email, etc.] *

Appendix 2: Workshop series outline

Depending on how proficient the participants are and the technical issues, the timeline may change to one session per week or there may be longer sessions or more number of sessions. There will be a short evaluation survey in the middle or end of each session to take attendance and ask for feedback. More details are outlined in the visualisation.

	Торіс	Details
Session 1	Course Introduction	Course introduction Pre-course evaluation Ice breaking activities



		Assessment: surveys
Session 2	Essential Business Communication Skills	Ten important Business Communication Skills Assessment: pair/ group work
Session 3	How to write a CV/ Resume	Format of resumes Vocabulary for describing relevant work experience. Practice writing resumes Assessment: individual work
Session 4	How to write a Cover Letter	Format of cover letter Practice writing cover letters Assessment: individual work
Session 5	Interview Skills: Before, During and After	Types of interviews Mock interviews Assessment: pair/ group work
Session 6	Graph analysis	Types of graphs Vocabulary for describing graphs. Assessment: pair/ group work, homework
Session 7	How to Express Opinions	Vocabulary for expressing opinions. Formal & informal communication Assessment: discussion Padlet
Session 8	Business vocabulary, pronunciation, and self-introduction	Self-learning resources Post-course evaluation



Appendix 3: Adolescent Resilience Scale

The most relevant aspects of Oshio et al.'s adolescence resilience skills are the questions under "positive future orientation." In the Qualtrics form, participants will be asked to rate the statements on a scale from 1 to 10.

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APPENDIX

ITEM CONTENT OF THE ADOLESCENT RESILIENCE SCALE

Novelty Seeking I seek new challenges. I like new or intriguing things. I think I have a high level of interest and curiosity. I like to find out about things. I think difficulties form a part of life's valuable experiences. I don't like to do unfamiliar things. I find it bothersome to start new activities. **Emotional Regulation** I think I can control my emotions. I can stay calm in tough circumstances. I make an effort to always stay calm. I think I have perseverance. I find it difficult not to dwell on a negative experience.* I cannot endure adversity.* My behavior varies with my daily moods.* I lose interest quickly.* I have difficulty in controlling my anger.* Positive Future Orientation I am sure that good things will happen in the future. I think I have a bright future. I feel positive about my future. I have a clear goal for the future. I am striving towards my future goal.

*Reverse-scored items.

Appendix 4: Relevant links

consent form

https://eduhk.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3PqU92N1rMXMH0W



English assessment

https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/test-your-english/business/

Resilience scale https://eduhk.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0GHags6uL30u6Am

course registration https://forms.gle/YUdB5tEN2eBLrQ3c7

Course attendance

https://eduhk.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5nHLIjQ8oC34Ohw

Rohingya Youth Advocacy Network

https://www.linkedin.com/in/rohingya-youth-advocacy-network-2895ba28b?trk=public_post_fee d-actor-name

Appendix 5: Images



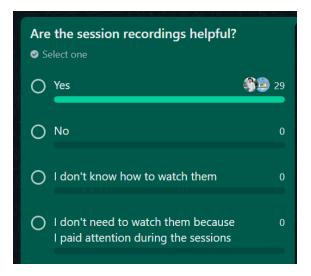


Image 1: Whatsapp poll



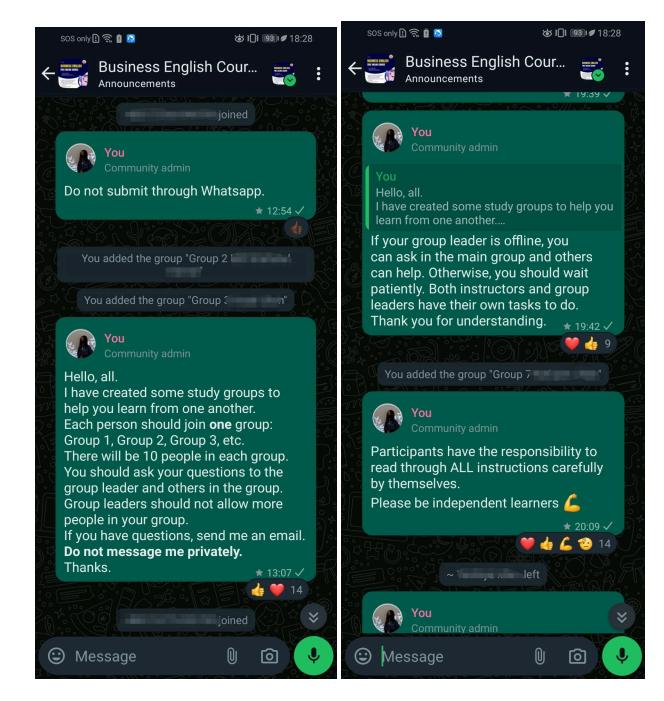


Image 2a & b: Whatsapp study groups



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Image 3: Step by step on how to use Google Docs

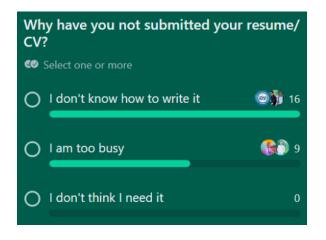


Image 4: Whatsapp poll 2



Dear Sir,

I, the undersigned would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that I am applying for the post of Humanitarian Affairs Liaison under your project in MSF (OCA). Currently, I am part of MSF (OCP) and always highly enthusiastic to be part of MSF because it is a Nobel prize awarded international medical humanitarian organization working in more than 70 countries worldwide. Besides this, MSF has been providing medical care to the affected refugees and host in Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh since years ago.MSF also stands against all forms of discrimination on whatever basis of gender, age, race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, legal status or any arbitrary and false distinction.

I am highly motivated to apply for this post because your job requirements are very relevant with my previous five years experience as a focal for the manger and CHV's supervisor of Epidemiologist and HP team respectively in MSF (OCP). I strongly believe that this will be an amazing working environment where I could utilize my previous work experiences and fulfil your needs as well as my aspiration. I am a good communicator and able to organize and prioritize workload, and work indepdently. I am able to cope with stress. I can select safe and risk working environment. I am aslo good in English writing, speaking and understanding. So I believe that I would be a perfect fit for this volunteer position of Humanitarian Affairs Liaison.

Image 5: Feedback on participant work from Canvas LMS

	cover letter
2	Miss Kato who? which organisation? what is their address?
/	Miss Kato no need
/	Miss Kato where did you see the post advertised?
2	Miss Kato write the full form
/	Miss Kato





Image 6: Whatsapp announcement on use of AI tools



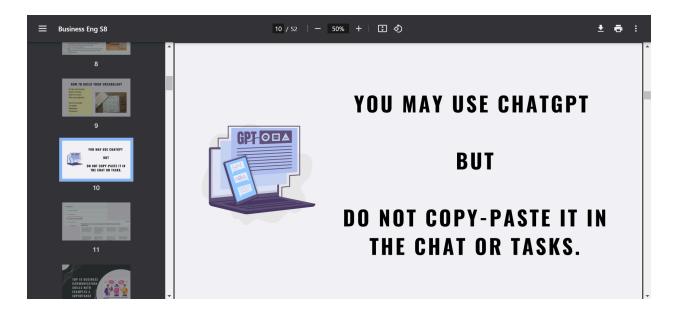


Image 7: Session 8 slides screenshot

