

# Interpretation of Teachers' Understanding of the Concept of Personal Social Responsibility

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**Abstract**—This paper explores the concept of personal social responsibility from the teachers' self-perceived perspective of its occurrence and understanding in the context of English language teaching and learning. It seeks to highlight the variety of constituents, qualities, and characteristics that shape it. Mixed methods research methodology is used for the analysis and interpretation of personal social responsibility taking into account teachers' descriptions of its constituents' level of importance, attitudinal characteristics to the chosen profession, qualities that characterize individual's behavior towards other people, community and society, and how teaching personal social responsibility might have an impact on students' learning and development. The participants of the study are English language educators representing the multicultural teaching community in the tertiary education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. The findings of the study show that the concept of personal social responsibility is perceived as significantly important and meaningful; however, it yields considering approaches in the way it is provided, communicated, and taught in the English language courses. It is expected that the findings of this study may give proper guidance in forming future decisions about personal social responsibility teaching to empower students and enhance their academic and professional success.

**Index Terms**—social responsibility, English language classroom, skills, Sultanate of Oman

## I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars have recognized that social responsibility is becoming a gradually vital concept in the continuous “debate about how to maintain competitiveness and sustainability in the context of globalization” (Santos, Marques, Justino, & Mendes, 2020, p.1). According to Brimmer (2007), the issue of responsibility is “foundational to understanding organizational ethics” (n.p.). Currently, social responsibility focuses on the effects that both individual and corporate acts can have on the outside world. These effects would include the society, community, and culture (What is social responsibility, 2019). It involves corporate and personal social responsibility.

In the context of the corporate world, social responsibility indicates that “business, in addition to maximizing stakeholder value, must act in a manner that benefits the society” (Social responsibility, 2019, n.p.). There is a large body of research on the nature and practice of corporate social responsibility, as well as related social expectations in different types of economies and enterprise sectors (Jamali & Mirshak, 2007; Khan & Al Mamari, 2016). The concept of personal social responsibility is less explored. It has emerged as a constituent of social responsibility ethical framework. Researchers have asserted that this concept is in response to the increasing demand of the societies to have individuals who act more responsibly towards their families, workplace, community, and environment (both ecological and social). Literature further affirms that personal social responsibility is the moral responsibility of every citizen to do the right thing (Venugopala, 2015). The cited author confirmed that it is voluntary and about personal integrity, ethics, commitment, and ownership. Also, it is about giving, taking, and striving towards the continuous betterment of society (Venugopala, 2015). Davis, Rives, and de Mayaa (2017) who base their understanding of personal social responsibility on the concepts of corporate and consumer social responsibility contend that personal social responsibility describes “the individual's behavior toward and the effects on his/her social and ecological environment through his/her daily decisions” (n.p.).

According to Dewey (2004), “society not only continues to exist by transmission, by communication, but it may fairly be said to exist in transmission, in communication” (p. 4). In the light of this, the present paper focuses on the concept of personal social responsibility, its meaning, and its utility. It reports on a study conducted by the authors to

explore the understanding and views of the English language educators in Oman's institutions of higher education. It will shed light on the level of importance of the constituents of the concept of personal social responsibility, its qualities and characteristics, including individual attitudinal characteristics to the chosen profession and behavior towards other people, community, and society, and how personal social responsibility in teaching and learning might have an impact on how students learn and develop.

## II. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW ON PERSONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In a seminal paper titled *Introducing Personal Social Responsibility as a key element to upgrade CSR*, Davisa, Rives and de Mayaa (2017) initiated a discussion based on qualitative research of the construct of personal social responsibility, its justification, and definition that incorporated previous studies on ethical or responsible consumption and consumer social responsibility. The authors discuss the concept of personal social responsibility as "the way a person performs in his daily life as a member of the society---and not only as a consumer---basing his decisions in a desire to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive impacts on the social, economic and environmental in the long run" (Davisa, Rives & de Mayaa, 2017, p.160). Then they highlight how the social responsibility concept involves the perspectives for its future examination, including education and general development. In the view of Davisa, Rives and de Mayaa (2017), personal social responsibility "should describe the individual's behavior toward and the effects on his/her social and ecological environment through his/her daily decisions" (p.148). Consequently, the decisions of the individuals will be grounded on "seeking greater relationships with their stakeholders - in this case families, friends, colleagues or the community" (Davisa, Rives & de Mayaa, 2017, p.148).

While emphasizing the significant role of social responsibility in the contemporary era, Tkachenko and Hromovyk (2019) explore the methodological approaches to the integrated assessment of socially responsible behavior of undergraduate and post-graduate pharmacy students as a compulsory component of their professional activity. The authors identify some mandatory components of the pharmacists' social responsibility, including moral, psychological, legal, professional, political, civil, and environmental components. They also examine a structured set of internal determinants that are characteristic for socially responsible pharmacists, regulate their behavior and guide them along the course proposed by society. On similar lines, this study is closely related to research by Tkachenko, Chervonenko and Demchenko (2018) that investigated the personal social responsibility constituents of pharmacy specialists using the opinion of the representatives of practical pharmacy. In more detail, it explored their understanding of the nature and completeness of the definition of the concept of personal social responsibility" (PSR), as well as the qualities of the character that should be inherent in the responsible pharmacist at the present stage of development of the pharmaceutical industry. The authors emphasize the complex nature of the concept of personal social responsibility. They point, firstly, to its connectedness to the "study of the nature of the person himself (man), his spiritual and moral values, and the forms of their manifestation" (Tkachenko, Chervonenko & Demchenko, 2018, p.833). Secondly, Tkachenko, Chervonenko, and Demchenko (2018) explain that in the phrase 'social responsibility', the first component refers to its social dimensions, while "the interpretation of the second component is ambiguous" (p.833). However, according to them, in the context of social responsibility, responsibility is the result of the individual's interactions with the society; therefore, a socially responsible individual is a result of social activities "related to the satisfaction of the needs of the subject, his interests, priorities, internal guidelines ... formed, manifested and evolved only in the process of human activity (Tkachenko, Chervonenko & Demchenko, 2018, p.834). In addition, social responsibility incorporates "the mandatory presence of the object of socially responsible behavior" that represents the subject of the activity entrusted to the individual or "taken by him as a commitment, the norm of activity" (Kolot, 2011, as cited in Tkachenko, Chervonenko & Demchenko, 2018, p.834); consequently, moral, psychological, legal, professional, political, civil and ecological components are integral for the social responsibility construct. In the authors' view, these are developed as personal qualities due to self-control in the process that transforms the individual into "an active and creative subject of activity" (ibid.). Their study further illustrated that the list of the personal social responsibility's constituents includes, for example, awareness of the need to act in accordance with public requirements and norms; prediction of consequences for one's choice, decision, action; criticality, and constant control over their actions, etc. As for the characteristics of personal social responsibility, they involve readiness to be responsible for their actions; awareness of the need to act in accordance with public requirements and norms; prediction of consequences for one's choice, decision, action, etc. The list of the qualities that characterize a person's attitude to the case, to the chosen profession involves professionalism, responsibility for their actions and decisions, devotion to his profession, care about the order, quality and acuteness, teamwork and cooperation, ability to influence (ability to persuade or persuade), ability to motivate oneself and others for professional, activity persistence, initiative, commitment to the company. The qualities that characterize the relation of humans to other people, community, and society involve patience, self-control behavior, communication, ability to listen to others, tact, justice, the same attitude to all people, kindness, compassion, and keenness. In the social sphere, the concept of personal social responsibility is explored in the study by Pihovsky (2018) that underscores the value of forming a social responsibility of a specialist in the social sphere for the fulfillment of the individual's professional duties. Following this line of argument, 'responsibility' is understood as an awareness of the significance of one's acts and their consequences for society, and 'social responsibility' refers to conscious and voluntary meeting social requirements, norms and regulations. Pihovsky (2018) focuses on the development of social

responsibility of a specialist in the Ukrainian social sphere which, in the author's view, is characterized by different levels (maximum, minimum, permissible and actual, as well as mega-, macro-, meso-, micro-), characteristic features, structure (subject and object), types (non-legal (includes state, civil, political, economic, moral, national, religious, industrial, family, etc.) and legal (legal social responsibility), principles (humanism, transparency, accountability, moderation in the decision-making process, patriotism, duty, spirituality, professional competence, creative orientation, hard work) and forms (voluntary and forced) implementation of social responsibility. The complex analysis of the social responsibility in the study by Pihovsky (2018) also determines the prospects of social responsibility development as a personal quality of future specialists while emphasizing the essential role of higher education in this endeavor.

### III. THE STUDY

This part of the paper discusses and explains the findings of the study that investigated teachers' understanding of the concept of personal social responsibility. The subjects of the study were the representatives of the English language teaching community with diverse teaching experience and educational background who work in Oman's system of higher education that is "dynamic and has grown rapidly over the past three decades" (Baporikar & Shah, 2012, p.9). In order to explore the concept of personal social responsibility, several modes of gathering information were followed. The survey was administered to study participants online both via Survey Monkey, and email. The important areas in this study were teachers' views and perceptions of the level of importance of the personal social responsibility construct's constituents, individual characteristics of a person's attitude to the chosen profession, individual's behavior towards other people, community and society, and the ways in which personal social responsibility in teaching and learning might have an impact on how students learn and develop.

#### A. Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative methodology that examined English language teachers' understanding of the concept of personal social responsibility. A survey was developed to include some of the items adapted from the questionnaire used in the research by Tkachenko, Chervonenko, and Demchenko (2018) to fit the purpose and the context of the study and be meaningful to its participants. The adaptations involved modifications of the items, as well as the creation of new items and sections in the survey.

The data in the survey had four major sections. The first part of the survey contained information related to the demographic characteristics of the study participants. These items gathered information regarding the participants' background information, including gender, age, education, teaching experience, and teaching position. The second part of the survey explored teachers' understanding of the concept of personal social responsibility. This section of the survey focused on the constituents of personal social responsibility, for example, self-confidence, self-actualization, self-management, self-efficacy, diligence, etc.; the characteristics of a person's attitude to the chosen profession, for example, professionalism, perseverance, initiative, reliability, etc., and the qualities that characterize individual's behavior towards other people, community and society, for example, patience, self-control, communication, courtesy, confidence, etc. The participants were asked to evaluate these items as 'very important,' 'important,' 'not so important,' 'not important at all,' and 'not applicable/I am not sure.' Thus, the first two sections consisted of quantitative questions that defined the participants' traits and opinions. These questions took the major bulk of the survey. The final part of the survey was an attempt to draw qualitative data. In this section, the researchers asked the participants to provide their autobiographical accounts and share their memorable experiences of teaching personal social responsibility in the classroom. The survey was pre-tested with eight senior English instructors and revised accordingly. It was also reviewed by the researchers from Sultan Qaboos University, whose feedback was used for the last minor revision before the data collection.

The survey was administered online as an email attachment and on the [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) platform to be available to the English language educators in the higher education institutions in Oman. Out of 100 surveys, only 56 reposed, yielding a 56% response rate. The surveys were taken by the educators based on their agreement to be part of the study sample on a voluntary basis. In total, 56 surveys were collected; however, only 47 of those were fully completed, and 9 participants skipped the questions in the second and the third sections of the survey. The overall data obtained from 47 participants were categorized as Question Summaries, Data Trends, and Individual Responses. Question Summaries were arranged as graphs and tables containing answer choices, responses in numbers, percentages, and weighted averages. Individual Responses and autobiographical accounts were labeled as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. All these data were saved on one computer for examination and qualitative analysis.

#### B. Participants

The target participants in this study were English language teachers representing the multicultural teaching community in the Sultanate of Oman. Data showed that there were differences in terms of the participants' age, gender, teaching experience, educational background, and teaching position. Fifty-six subjects (male (29-51.79%) and female (27-48.21%)) responded to the survey and participated in this research. The study participants represented a diversity of educational levels with 13 (23.21%) participants having the highest educational level, e.g., Ph.D., EdD. However, the Master's degree (e.g., MA, MSc, MEd) holders comprised the majority of study participants (39-69.64%) with other

education level holders (4) making up 7.14% of all the participants. As for their teaching experience, 5.36% (3 participants) had from 1 to 5 years; 10.71% (6 participants) from 6 to 10 years; 12.50% (7 participants) from 11 to 15 years; 17.86% (10 participants) from 16 to 20 years, and 53.57% (30 participants) more than 20 years of experience. These participants occupied different academic positions at the institutions of higher education in Oman, namely the positions of Assistant Professor (12.50% - 7), Language Lecturer (60.71% - 34), Assistant Language Lecturer (5.36% - 3), Senior Language Instructor (10.71% - 6), Language Instructor (5.36% - 3) as well as some other positions not specified by the subjects (5.36% - 3). Out of these 56 participants, nine individuals completed only the background information section. They skipped the sections of the survey that focused on their opinions and views. The results and discussion section will describe the insights provided by 47 participants in this study.

### *C. Results and Discussion*

The findings related to teachers' understanding of the concept of personal social responsibility covered the constituents of personal social responsibility, the characteristics of a person's attitude to the chosen profession and the qualities that characterize an individual's behavior towards other people, community and society.

Such constituents of personal social responsibility, as self-confidence (76.60%), understanding of values underpinning the profession and its socially responsible practice (74.47%), wish to avoid hurting or possibly causing another person harm (74.47%), commitment to the highest professional standards (70.21%), self-management (70.21%), readiness to take responsibility for actions and demonstrate responsible behavior that involves honesty, compassion/respect, fairness (What is responsible behavior?, n.d.) (68.09%), preparedness to meet a situation and carry out a planned sequence of actions (63.83%) and awareness of the effects of the organization's activities on the quality of human and social life (63.83%) were evaluated as 'very important' by the majority of the participants. The constituents of personal social responsibility rated as 'important' involved self-actualization (40.43%), self-efficacy (40.43%), diligence (42.55%), awareness of the necessity to act following public policy interests, requirements and norms (40.43%). Among other constituents of personal social responsibility, prediction of potential consequences of actions and choices was considered as 'very important' by 46.81%, 'important' by 44.68% and 'not so important' by 6.38% of the participants whereas 2.13% of the participants found it challenging to evaluate this constituent. Similarly, 2.13% of the participants were unsure when ranking such constituents, as diligence, prediction of potential consequences of actions and choices, awareness of the necessity to act following public policy interests, requirements and norms, and understanding of values underpinning the profession and its socially responsible practice. Interestingly enough though rated as 'very important' by most of the participants, such constituent of social personal responsibility as wish to avoid hurting or possibly causing another person harm was rated as 'not important at all' by 2.33% of the study participants. The prediction of potential consequences of actions and choices had the highest weighted average among all the constituents of the personal social responsibility as perceived by the study participants (1.66), while the varying degrees of importance of the numbers and percentages were in a data set referring to such constituent, as self-confidence (see Table 1 for more information). Nevertheless, this constituent was valued highly by the participants and, as mentioned by one of them, "it is important for the teacher to have self-confidence, i.e., the ability to judge one's own social and personal standing, in the classroom, and when dealing with individual students; students can tell if the teacher lacks confidence, and this may be transmitted to the student themselves" (Participant 12).

TABLE I.  
CONSTITUENTS OF PERSONAL SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS RATED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATORS

Constituents	Very important	Important	Not so important	Not important at all	Not applicable/I am not sure	Total	Weighted average
Self-confidence	76.60% 36	24.30% 11	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.23
Self-actualization	59.57% 28	40.43% 19	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.40
Self-management	70.21% 33	29.79% 14	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.30
Self-efficacy	59.57% 28	40.43% 19	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.40
Diligence	55.32% 26	42.55% 20	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.51
Prediction of potential consequences of actions and choices	46.81% 22	44.68% 21	6.38% 3	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.66
Preparedness to meet a situation and carry out a planned sequence of actions	63.83% 30	31.91% 15	4.26% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.40
Readiness to take responsibility for actions and demonstrate responsible behavior components involve honesty, compassion/respect, fairness, accountability, and courage	68.09% 32	31.91% 15	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.32
Awareness of the necessity to act following public policy interests, requirements and norms	55.32% 26	40.43% 19	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.53
Awareness of the effects of the organization's activities on the quality of human and social life	63.83% 30	34.04% 16	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.38
Understanding of values underpinning the profession and its socially responsible practice	74.47% 35	21.28% 10	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.34
Wish to avoid hurting or possibly causing another person harm	74.47% 35	21.28% 10	2.13% 1	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	47	1.32
Commitment to the highest professional standards	70.21% 33	25.53% 12	4.26% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.34

When asked about their opinion about the characteristics of a person's attitude to the chosen profession, most of the participants (85.11%) rated work commitment as 'very important.' A characteristic such as respect for others was also rated high as 'very important' by the participants (80.85%). The elicited information about professionalism as another characteristic of the attitude of a person to the profession showed that it was ranked as 'very important' by 78.72%, 'important' by 19.15% and 'not important' only by 2.13% of the participants. As for the other items in the list of the characteristics, for example, reliability, initiative, perseverance, ability to work in harmony with co-workers, almost each of them were rated as 'very important' or 'important' by more than half of the participants (see Table 2 for more information about these characteristics). The views and considerations of the study participants about the characteristics of a person's attitude to the chosen profession seem to indicate that they mostly present a valuable set of features and qualities since they received a high evaluation by the majority of the participants. However, for example, enthusiasm about life was evaluated as 'very important' by 57.45%, 'important' by 31.91% of the respondents, while 10.64% of them ranked this characteristic as 'not so important.'

TABLE II.  
CHARACTERISTICS OF A PERSON'S ATTITUDE TO A CHOSEN PROFESSION AS RATED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATORS

Characteristics	Very important	Important	Not so important	Not important at all	Not applicable/I am not sure	Total	Weighted average
Professionalism	78.72% 37	19.15% 9	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.23
Perseverance	68.09% 32	27.66% 13	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.40
Initiative	59.57% 28	36.17% 17	4.26% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.45
Reliability	76.60% 36	21.28% 10	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	47	1.28
Ability to work in harmony with co-workers	74.47% 35	23.40% 11	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.28
Work commitment	85.11% 40	14.89% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.15
Respect for others	80.85% 38	17.02% 8	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.21
Responsibility for actions and decisions	76.60% 36	21.28% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.30
Dedication and diligence to profession	74.47% 35	23.40% 11	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.28
Helpfulness with others	61.70% 29	36.17% 17	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	47	1.43
Enthusiasm about life	57.45% 27	31.91% 15	10.64% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.53
Job involvement	68.09% 32	31.91% 15	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.32
Innovative ideas and finding new ways	59.57% 28	34.04% 16	4.26% 2	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.51

As for the participants' opinions about the qualities that characterize individual's behavior towards other people, community and society, the data revealed that compassion, empathy, and respect for the essential dignity of all persons (78.72%), moral courage and high ethics (78.72%) and a reputation for honesty, integrity and fairness (74.47%) received 'very important' evaluation from the participants. An almost similar number of the participants highly valued confidence (72.34%), strong, dignified interpersonal skills (65.96%), patience (63.83%), self-control (63.83%), ability to listen to what others say (63.83%), communication (61.70%), and evaluated these qualities as 'very important'. Regarding commitment to principles of accountability to the community, nearly half of the participants valued this quality as 'very important' (57.45%) and 'important' (40.43%). Only 2.33% of the participants rated it as 'not so important.' Nearly similar responses were obtained for some other qualities listed in this part of the survey, for example, keen interest in people and humanity, including cross-cultural experience and engagement was rated as 'very important' by 59.57%, 'important' by 36.17% and 'not so important' by 4.26% of the participants with weighted average 1.45. Although ranked as 'very important' and 'important' by most study participants, a quality such as demonstrated commitment to community service received a little less emphasis, namely 48.94%, and 46.81% respectively. Additionally, 2.13% of the respondents rated this quality as 'not so important' and 2.13% of the respondents were undetermined when rating it (see Table 3 for more details about the participants' opinions on the qualities that characterize individual's behavior towards other people, community and society).

TABLE III.  
QUALITIES THAT CHARACTERIZE INDIVIDUAL'S BEHAVIOR TOWARDS OTHER PEOPLE, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIETY AS RATED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATORS

Qualities	Very important	Important	Not so important	Not important at all	Not applicable/I am not sure	Total	Weighted average
Patience	63.83% 30	36.17% 17	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.36
Self-control	63.83% 30	31.91% 15	4.26% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.40
Communication	61.70% 29	38.30% 18	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.38
Courtesy	51.06% 24	40.43% 19	8.51% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.57
Confidence	72.34% 34	25.53% 12	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.30
Ability to listen to what others say	63.83% 30	34.04% 16	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	47	1.40
Compassion, empathy, and respect for the essential dignity of all persons	78.72% 37	19.15% 9	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.23
Strong, dignified interpersonal skills	65.96% 31	31.91% 15	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.36
A reputation for honesty, integrity and fairness	74.47% 35	23.40% 11	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.28
Moral courage and high ethics	78.72% 37	21.28% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.21
Commitment to principles of accountability to the community	57.45% 27	40.43% 19	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.45
Keen interest in people and humanity, including cross-cultural experience and engagement	59.57% 28	36.17% 17	4.26% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47	1.45
A demonstrated commitment to community service	48.94% 23	46.81% 22	2.13% 1	0.00% 0	2.13% 1	47	1.60

Overall, the participants' autobiographical accounts supported their rating of personal social responsibility, its constituents and related qualities and characteristics as highly valued, necessary and of great consequence to teaching, learning, and acting in the best interests of the society as a whole. This can be illustrated by the words of one of the participants in the study who believes that as an educator in the English classroom, it is important to "consider the individual's personal social responsibility to not only guide the students in their learning of the English language but also to guide them in how to be socially responsible" (Participant 10). Along the same line, another participant noted: "We may not always be aware that, as teachers, we are communicating social responsibility to our students in the classroom, which ultimately spreads into society as a whole. I believe that it is all about playing a part, setting a good example, and being a good role model for the class as a whole and for individuals in the class" (Participant 7).

The participants' autobiographical accounts demonstrate that good citizenship and social responsibility, engaging in community affairs, and being mindful of contemporary issues are among attributes that graduates of the higher education institutions in Oman should achieve. Therefore, students are guided towards these attributes by introducing the learning of the English language in a social context, i.e., the context that refers to "certain aspects that characterize each learner along with the learning conditions that surround him/her" (Aguirre, 2013, p.27). Some of the most common examples of teaching personal social responsibility in the English language classroom in the context of higher education institutions in Oman provided in the participants' autobiographical accounts include firstly and most of all teaching a language skill "that would be of direct use in students' daily lives" and "embodies social responsibility" (Participant 8), as well as introducing community-based learning projects as part of the curriculum and integrating problem-based learning projects with students. To illustrate, one of the participants in the study described community-based learning and problem-based projects that were used to encourage students to further develop their sense of personal social responsibility. In this participant's English language program, community-based learning projects are a part of the curriculum, involving students connecting their classroom and their language learning to their community (Participant 3). These projects were exemplified by a reading activity on the Oman Botanic Garden that engaged students with the botanists, and garden workers at the garden directly. As described by the participant, "the reading text explored the environmental situation in Oman where indigenous plants are becoming endangered, and described the garden being

established to preserve, protect and showcase these plants. For some students reading about this local environmental problem may have been enough to encourage social responsibility. However, having the opportunity to visit the garden in person and ask the botanists and garden workers who are physically involved with the preservation and protection of these native plants was clearly an eye-opening experience for many students. The student reflections later revealed how many had not known that Omani indigenous plants were endangered. By connecting directly with the community beyond the classroom, their awareness had been raised, and they were encouraged to raise the awareness of their friends and family” (Participant 3). Another example of promoting personal social responsibility in the language classroom referred to introducing problem-based learning projects with English for Science students. According to the participant’s autobiographical account, “in these language learning classes, students work in teams on a semester-long project to research and find solutions or ways of mitigating an ill-structured socio-scientific problem. The project generally focuses on environmental issues, and the teams give a presentation to classmates, put on a poster exhibition and write reflections on their experience” (Participant 3). The participant further explained: “When the students reflect I have found that they are honest and often relate that when they started the project they were unaware of the problems. However, by the time they come to present the problems they are convinced that a solution needs to be found. At the end of the course after the team has researched together, they exhibit their solutions on a poster to the whole community of students and staff at their learning center” (Participant 3). The participant also expressed her pride and genuine surprise about the knowledge and awareness her students have gained through the projects, and they were able to passionately disseminate them to a large number of their peers through a public forum. As exemplified in the study participant’s autobiographical account, “students who researched the problem of microplastic ocean pollution had previously bought several plastic bottles of water a day to quench their thirst in Oman’s hot climate, and they said they never thought about the effect that this might have on ocean plastic pollution. However, by the end of the project they were all using reusable water bottles”. Overall, according to her, in general, students “who have been involved in both kinds of projects showed that they were moving towards the university’s goal for its graduates being socially responsible, engaging in community affairs and being mindful of contemporary issues” (Participant 3).

The majority of the participants noted the importance of teachers as role models in teaching personal social responsibility while focusing on such aspects, as creating friendly classroom atmosphere; having respect for the classroom environment as a part of showing students good social behavior; for example, treating the classroom equipment with respect, and keeping the classroom tidy and not creating any litter there; on-going support to students in terms of demonstrating sensitivity to their culture and empathy towards their social issues. To exemplify, one of the study participants in her autobiographical account wrote: “Generally speaking, a teacher should be a good role model for his/her students. I remember trying to create a welcoming atmosphere towards the students as they entered the classroom. As they entered the classroom gradually, it was nice to greet each one as they came in, using their name, thus acknowledging their presence. I believe that I was also showing sensitivity to their culture and empathy towards their social issues, by behaving appropriately myself. For example, if a student came with a problem regarding family matters, I tried to be sympathetic and empathetic. As a teacher, I hope I was showing them that consideration for others and patience with each other are important. Hopefully, they also appreciated the need to be responsible for their own actions and the consequences of those actions” (Participant 12). The participant elaborated further and emphasized some other aspects of being socially responsible in the classroom, which can have a positive effect on students’ learning and participation and when those students go out into the community at large. This would include encouraging students to be volunteers, whether answering questions voluntarily, or doing something to help a fellow student in difficulties. Teachers would motivate students to be socially responsible towards each other, and thereby be good role models for each other by being punctual for class, being prepared for classes, respecting school property, completing all homework assignments, managing time well, respecting themselves and others, listening attentively in class to the teacher and other students, making their best effort (Participant 12). These thoughts of the study participant were supported by three examples from her experience of teaching English in the higher education institutions in Oman. In the first example, Student A had had excellent English, but as required by all the students in her study program at the time, she had to attend English classes. However, she did not always listen and pay attention in class. This affected her performance on a simple class assignment concerning writing the correct times shown on some clocks. Most of the time, while the other students were doing the task, she would talk to her peer and would not keep quiet and focus on the task in hand, despite the teacher’s requests to do so. Consequently, she did poorly on the related assignment, and later agreed to see the teacher in the office. It turned out that she had a poor grasp of the concept of expressing the time in English. The teacher went over the assignment with her and then felt that the student regretted her lack of attention in class and admitted she should have listened more carefully. In the example of Student B, the student’s attitude to his homework was his main problem. He just did not do it. As a result, his exam results were not very good. During a conversation with him in private, the teacher learned that he was married with children, so she showed her appreciation that he had family responsibilities. However, one day, he persistently tried to persuade the teacher to give him a better grade. At that the teachers became rather upset with the student. She reminded him that as a father he should surely have a more responsible attitude to his work if he wanted to be a good role model for his children. The example of Student C that was narrated by this particular study participant showed a great deal of her sympathy, empathy, and understanding towards one student, who himself was training to become a teacher, but had many family issues that he was dealing



with at the time. He missed his classes frequently, but always brought a valid excuse for his absence, which seemed acceptable. His teacher training schedule was very demanding, and the English class was at the end of the day. He struggled to get to class on time, partly because of his schedule and partly because of the demands of his family. In response, the teacher thought that it was better for the student if she showed some sympathy and understanding, rather than put him under more stress by being unconcerned or unkind (Participant 12). This participant's autobiographical account and supporting examples from the English language classroom corroborate with Pihovsky's (2018) description of teaching and learning personal social responsibility as voluntary and not forced. For example, in retrospect, she interpreted her reactions and behavior towards her students as part of her overall efforts to teach them social responsibility. However, according to her, she was not necessarily conscious of that at the time, and the students, in her view, were appreciative and grateful and tried to have a positive attitude in response. Additionally, according to this participant's opinion, students also have a certain impact and 'teach teachers.' This participant, for example, contended: "Some of the students' behavior probably did influence my teaching, as I saw most of them as good role models that I would like to emulate myself throughout my profession. I thank them and sincerely hope that our students would also one day remember that something we did or said will remain in their minds as a positive influence in their lives" (Participant 12). In the same style of writing, another study participant emphasized the role of teaching personal social responsibility in the English language classroom as a venue giving both teachers and students a "sense of personal responsibility" (Participant 8) in addition to encouraging language educators to "identify learners' needs and work to address and support them" (Participant 8), listen to their students and "be open to dialogue and communication" (Participant 11). To use the ideas of Bakhtin (1981), during these interactional processes, the meaning is jointly constructed.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the study clearly demonstrate that the constituents of the personal social responsibility as well as related characteristics and qualities have exceptional importance for the English language educators in Oman. Firstly, the attributes that graduates of the institutions of higher education in Oman should achieve include good citizenship and social responsibility, engaging in community affairs and being mindful of contemporary issues. Secondly, teachers value personal social responsibility highly and make every effort to engage with the students in their English language classrooms and guide them towards these attributes by introducing language learning within a meaningful socio-cultural context. Moreover, during the interactive process of personal social responsibility teaching and learning, the meaning is jointly constructed by both teachers and students. By further exploring the constituents, qualities and characteristics of personal social responsibility in the context of the English language teaching and learning practice in the country's system of higher education, effective educational and pedagogical approaches can be developed, communicated and taught to give students further guidance, empower them and enhance their academic success.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to extend their sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Deanship of Research at Sultan Qaboos University for supporting this study by an internal research grant.

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