

TUNISIA SPEAKS ENGLISH

Conference recommendations

November 2015



Three leading Tunisian Teachers' Associations Tunisia TESOL, Tunisian Association of Teachers of English (TATE) and the Tunisian Education and Resource Network (TEARN), in partnership with the British Council, organized the first **Tunisia Speaks English**, a two-day conference from 7-8 November 2015.

Tunisia Speaks English conference was organised as part of **English Language Month 2015**, a national campaign by British Council and British Embassy Tunis, aiming to promote the importance of languages and in particular better levels of English to improve the employability of young Tunisians.

Key aims:

- Increased awareness in Tunisia of the importance of learning languages and in particular English;
- A better awareness of the range of supports available for English learners and teachers and how to access them.

English Language Month 2015 is organised with the following partners



Tunisia Speaks English conference took place at Alhambra Thalasso Hotel in Hammamet and hosted 300 delegates who represented a wide range of stakeholders involved in the teaching and learning of English in Tunisia. They included:

- English language teaching practitioners (teachers, trainers, and inspectors)
- students
- Parents
- Policy makers from the three ministries of education
- The employment agencies.

The aim of the conference was:

Convene and allow delegates to propose a series of recommendations that can be taken forward by stakeholders in the context of the current reform process being undertaken by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and other stakeholders to help improve the levels of English language proficiency of students finishing school, vocational training and university.

The participants were guided through the process of recommendation writing by education experts from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and the United Kingdom.

All stakeholders' representatives worked together in an inclusive and participatory approach to propose a list of key recommendations to improve the levels of English proficiency through better teaching and learning of English.

Recommendation workshops were conducted around the following 4 key areas:

A. Learner training, recognized certification and employability

B. The Role of Technology for better learning of English

C. Teacher training, continuous professional development and certification

D. Testing and assessment for better learning of English

OUTCOME OF THE RECOMMENDATION WORKSHOPS

KEY AREA A: LEARNER TRAINING, RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION AND EMPLOYABILITY

Preface: Recognized certification helps young Tunisians find jobs in Tunisia and abroad.

Access to university quality learning resources is vital to support more independent study and more informal learning that will complement formal education.

Top 3 recommendations

- **More training in English and soft skills**

- Developing a complementary training scheme on **soft skills** for unemployed university graduates
- Integrating the teaching of soft skills in the national curriculum.

- **Reinforced collaboration between the ministries involved in education and training**

- Establish **connections between the three key ministries**; the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Education and the ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, to ensure more collaboration in particular in English language teaching process. (The Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies will also be needed as a partner in this process)

- **Bridging the gap between student's skills and the employers' demand**

- Consider an **inclusive approach** involving students and employers and reinforce the role of civil society in discussions about the relationship between the national curriculum and the demands of the job market.
Research and database actions are also strongly recommended.

Other recommendations

- **Information days about internationally recognized certifications**

- Provide **more accessibility to support programs** provided by the government and ensure there is enough communication about them in underprivileged regions
- Deliver information sessions about **internationally recognized certification**.

- **Internships and international exchange opportunities**

- More **internships and exchange opportunities** for students in collaboration with business leaders.

- **English is strengthened in vocational training**

- Strengthen English language teaching and learning in the vocational training centers

- **A global leadership curriculum**

- Incorporate global leadership into the national curriculum to help students acquire **useful leadership skills** from a young age.

KEY AREA B: THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR BETTER LEARNING OF ENGLISH

Preface: Technology complements good teaching and learning practices. It is also important to mention that it needs a 3 way budget for 1. Purchase of hardware 2. Maintenance and 3. Training (with approximately a third of the budget total recommended for each area)

Top 3 recommendations

• Training on the use of technology in language learning

- **On-going training** and the background knowledge in the theory & practice of Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) along with **practice-oriented training** so that teachers adopt the technology faster and see for themselves its "added value" in their day-to-day practice, while also **meeting learners expectations**.
- Assist inspectors in acquiring the skills that enable them to incorporate and model technology use in their own training provision
- Revise policies for the promotion of teachers so that those among them who acquire additional training can be recognised and able to apply for promotion. The regulations could also stipulate that teachers seek minimum number of training opportunities per year

• Resources and support mechanisms:

- Develop a strategy to **equip schools with the needed infrastructure** (hardware/software, wifi, and other accessories) and ensure sustainability (reliability, maintenance and updating). Advice at macro and micro levels is also needed (consultancy for the selection and evaluation of specific technology for teaching/learning which can be used in schools)
- Establish **coordination mechanisms** between ministries involved in tech use and education and form a national committee to plan technology integration and set national standards
- **Partner with tech companies** to assist in the provision of technology infrastructure, hardware and software.
- Innovative schools can think of ways to attract supporting organizations in IT business to sponsor schools/districts with a **technology implementation plan** (hardware, software, infrastructure, maintenance and training provision)

• Community-building:

- Build a **Portal for English language teachers** generally including technology-related information and online resources, software news and demos and news about e-learning opportunities.

- Motivate technology-using teachers by starting an **online journal** where they can
- Publish their work or exchange ideas with other organizations in the education and training field
- Put in place **support mechanisms** for learners and teachers (establish learning communities online)

Other recommendations

- **A national campaign**
- A **national campaign** targeting all stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance/necessity of incorporating technology use in education and in teaching specific school subjects (ELT as an example) in order to improve the profile of students
- **Contents**
- **Motivating** online contents which are **relevant to learners needs** and linked to the national curriculum

KEY AREA C: TEACHER TRAINING, CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CERTIFICATION

Preface: Teacher training is based on the belief that continuing support and lifelong learning is vital for educators.

Nationally and internationally recognised certification will help further professionalise the English language teaching system in Tunisia

Top 3 recommendations

- **One National Framework for teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- Create an internationally recognized and accredited **continuous professional framework** for all sectors to be based on best practice in pedagogy and subject content.
- Conduct periodic training and encourage an ongoing lifelong learning culture.
- Adopt a bottom up approach rather than a top down policy
- Consider best use of resources and encourage teachers to take responsibility for their own CPD.
- This is also essential for Vocational centers and for Primary Schools.

- **Training approaches and content need to be strengthened**

- Review evidence for 'what works' and base change on best practice:
 - more schools-based learning
 - Training to include practical learning and not just theory
 - Use peer to peer sharing and learning (teachers' clubs, mentoring, etc.
 - review of the quality assurance process by measuring students' progress in English
 - incorporate formal accreditation/certification
 - Use technology/ blended learning approaches to teaching
 - Find a strategy to ensure sustainability

- **Pre-service and In-service training**

- Consider a Pre and in service training.
- Pre-service training needs to include practical preparation for being in the classroom
- Training to include both pedagogy and language

Other recommendations

- **Build a network of all key stakeholders**

- Build a network of key stakeholders and invite all sectors – primary, secondary, Vocational training centers, universities, NGOs and international organizations.

- **Resources**

- Careful consideration should be given to resourcing options.

KEY AREA D: TESTING AND ASSESSMENT FOR BETTER LEARNING OF ENGLISH

Preface: A language assessment framework and approach is vital to be able to standardize and align testing.

Top 3 recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 3 day national conference to present, discuss and agree on a testing framework for ELT in Tunisia - A 3 day national conference on testing/assessment involving all those working in the 3 sectors and linking testing and assessment from primary through tertiary level within a national framework • Specialized training on testing and assessment - More training on testing involving all stakeholders, - Familiarize teachers with the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) • Explore further testing methods - Which skills to test, review the balance of productive and receptive skills - Alternative testing methods matching curriculum and course objectives
Other recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop our testing standards based on CEFR - Adapt the testing and assessment to the Tunisian context - Support student learning by conceptualizing and restructuring the assessment system. • Providing facilities/resources for teachers to test students in different sectors - Plugs, cassette, practice listening • Facilitate access to data and information about test results - Research analyses of tests make decision makers aware of the importance of research - Helping teachers/researchers to get access to the students' exam papers for analysis & evaluation - Creation of an item bank • Create a board of master test writers from the 3 sectors - The board of master test writers will conduct training on testing and assessment • More coordination among teachers from different domains (especially university teachers) to design common/standard tests - A call for the use of standardized and alternative assessment.



Final note:

It is hoped by the conference organisers and the participants that these collated recommendations will be shared between all stakeholders and in particular discussed and taken into account by the three key ministries as part of the national reform process to improve the levels of English proficiency of young Tunisians through better teaching and learning of English.

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