

ATEL 19th Annual Conference Speech – Roohi Malik

Good morning everyone. It's a great pleasure to be here with you all this morning and I'd like to thank the ATEL team for organizing this wonderful event. The British Council is proud to be one of the supporters of this conference today, which brings people together to reflect and celebrate the valuable profession of an English Teacher as well as the importance of the English language.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for education and cultural relations and we've been in Lebanon since 1946. At the British Council we promote English as part of the plurilingual society in Lebanon and our overall mission here is to empower learning, strengthen public institutions and support opportunities to foster relationships between Lebanon and the UK.

English language teaching is extremely important in Lebanon today and we are very proud of the work we are doing to support this both with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Centre of Educational Research and Development as well as various private school networks, Universities and international and national NGOs.

I'd also like to tell you about the innovative work we are doing with English in different projects in Lebanon. We've just finished working in partnership with MEHE on STEPS (Strengthening Teacher Education in a Plurilingual Society) which is a teacher training and capacity building of Guidance Counsellors programme that helps Lebanese teachers working in English and French language in the second shift schools and uses sociolinguistic approaches to help change attitudes, promote diversity in the classroom and motivate learning. We are also in the early stages of developing a new project focused on homework support to keep both vulnerable Lebanese children and Syrian refugee children in school and prevent drop-outs and are delighted that the history of our work here has positioned us to support Lebanon with their ongoing response to the Syria crisis.

We're also delighted to announce another new EU funded programme focusing on higher education aptly named 'Hopes' that the British Council have been awarded as part of a consortium led by DAAD. Our role in this project is to provide English Language teaching to both Lebanese and Syrian students in the most vulnerable areas in Lebanon and prepare them to take up scholarships, thus allowing them invaluable access to higher education opportunities.

Something else which may be of interest to you is that this year we are working on 'Shakespeare Lives' a major global programme across 140 countries around the world, celebrating Shakespeare's works and his influence on culture, education and language on the 400th anniversary of his death. In Lebanon we will be celebrating Shakespeare through a schools competition in partnership with CERD, creation of a teacher's pack, various teacher training workshops and movie screenings across Lebanon.

Shakespeare's influence on the English language is immense. His works include the first written usage of 1700 words, he enriched the English language in ways so profound it's almost impossible to fully gauge his impact. Without him, our vocabulary would be just too different. He gave us uniquely vivid ways in which to express hope and despair, sorrow and rage, love and kindness. Even if you've never read one of his sonnets or seen a play – you're likely to have quoted him unwittingly, especially in the English language classroom.

This brings me onto our keynote speaker today. Sarah Anne Phillips is an English Teacher, International Conference Presenter, freelance translator and English Language consultant. She has worked for a number of different institutions including the Université de Cergy-Pontoise in Paris, British Study Centres in London and is an associate of the Institute of Translating and Interpreting in the UK. Since joining the British Council in 2009 she has worked in Paris, Hong Kong and Amman. Her passion lies in running EFL courses for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and has worked on numerous projects within this area creating materials and working with the French Ministry of Education.

Today in her plenary session, Sarah will share her considerable her experience of foreign language perspectives for motivating both students and teachers. This will be followed by a workshop where participants will be encouraged to share stories of their own teaching practices as well as discovering new ideas and techniques.

I look forward to seeing this as well as the other wonderful sessions that the ATEL team have planned today.

Thank you