

TESOL to Host 2017 Summit on the Future of the ELT Profession in Athens, Greece

What does the future hold for the TESOL profession? As the demand for English language teaching and learning continues to grow globally, many questions must be answered: What are the qualities of a competent English language teacher? What role should English play in a multilingual global society? What policies should be in place to prepare the future generation of second language speakers? What are the myths currently driving those policies? What role should research play in this new environment? These are some of the key questions that will be addressed at the [Summit on the Future of the TESOL Profession](#).

Hosted by [TESOL International Association](#), this groundbreaking event will take place on 9–10 February 2017 in Athens, Greece. The summit will showcase [12 respected and innovative thought leaders](#) from six continents, whose ideas will challenge common misconceptions and will help envision a future grounded in the summit's [guiding principles](#) of equity, inquiry, and professionalism. The summit is intended to generate a strategic conversation around [four major themes](#).

Themes

Futurology

Futurists, who work to plan scenarios for the years ahead, often use PELT (political, economic, social, and technological) or SPELIT (social, political, economic, legal, intercultural, and technological) models when considering the same dimensions of the changes likely to be encountered. This broad, holistic perspective is essential for understanding the TESOL profession both today and in the future. Changes in these dimensions coalesce around four major issues, and each affects the TESOL profession. Population mobility results from competing ideologies, political and economic power shifts, economic inequality, and climate change. Governance structures and processes of traditional institutions are too inflexible and sclerotic for current rapid change. Decision-making is therefore caught between immediate responses without full knowledge and thought and stasis or immobility while processes take their time. Thus, nontraditional actors such as for-profit institutions and independent foundations move in to fill the gaps. The globalization of English has led to multiple Englishes. Instant, social technology amplifies these issues.

[Futurology Speakers](#)

- **Sue Garton** will address these concerns through the lens of inquiry.
- **Asmaa Abu Mezied** will address these concerns through the lens of equity.
- **Greg Kessler** will address these concerns through the lens of professionalism.

English in Multilingualism

Fears of English as the ruling language that will eradicate all other linguistic diversity abound. But globalization and technology invite and compel the TESOL profession to educate for English while at the same time supporting linguistic diversity. New technologies, for example, have supported the use of English but also the use of all other languages, and new social media,

particularly, have enabled and encouraged the playful combining and styling of English and vernaculars. Moreover, being bi/multilingual should be a right for all, as multilingualism contributes to people's psychological, academic, social, economic, and personal well-being. Hence, it is vital that the TESOL profession, in its mission to teach English, embraces the opportunity to support multilingualism.

[English in Multilingualism Speakers](#)

- **Li Wei** will address these concerns through the lens of inquiry.
- **Joseph Lo Bianco** will address these concerns through the lens of equity.
- **Robinah Kyeyune** will address these concerns through the lens of professionalism.

Reimagining English Competence

English competence has been traditionally defined in reference to “a native or ideal speaker” norm and in terms of the grammar of the language. Curricula, learning outcomes, and large-scale tests in use today are designed based on this norm. In light of the multiple Englishes used by different groups, the different purposes for learning English, and the awareness that there is no one “correct” version of English, this definition has been challenged. This has led to an ongoing debate between the need for establishing local English norms and the need for expanding the construct of English and setting an English norm that can be used across a variety of contexts in a global world. The question facing the TESOL field is whether English competence can be defined in such a way that it recognizes the diversity of English and can also be used for decision-making purposes.

[Reimagining English Competence Speakers](#)

- **Anne Katz** will address these concerns through the lens of inquiry.
- **Aya Matsuda** will address these concerns through the lens of equity.
- **Ahmar Mahboob** will address these concerns through the lens of professionalism.

The Profession as a Change Agent

TESOL-related policy making should mirror successful (traditional, virtual, and self-study) classroom practices: The notion of a learning-focused classroom should translate into practice-driven policy making, and the idea of encouraging students to take risks with their language learning should carry over to less risk-averse policy-shaping, especially in the public sphere. However, for this mirroring to happen, innovation, application, and reflection need to be encouraged among practitioners and practitioners need to be better positioned to influence research and policy. Currently, more flexible, nontraditional actors (i.e., for-profit institutions and some well-heeled foundations) are able to fill gaps left by less flexible public entities, shifting goals from achieving stronger student results to serving personal gain.

[The Profession as a Change Agent Speakers](#)

- **Constant Leung** will address these concerns through the lens of inquiry.
- **Franklin Téllez** will address these concerns through the lens of equity.

- **Misty Adoniou** will address these concerns through the lens of professionalism.

Shaping the Summit

In order to help construct this complex, strategic conversation around the profession's future, TESOL brought together nine prominent leaders to form the [TESOL Summit Steering Committee](#). Representing five continents, this prestigious and diverse group shouldered the responsibility of shaping the summit while also representing multiple aspects of the multifaceted TESOL profession. For additional guidance, the committee solicited advice and feedback from the [TESOL Summit Reference Group](#). Representing key stakeholders in the TESOL profession, this group of 17 organizations was instrumental in helping to define the summit.

The chair of the TESOL summit is Professor Emeritus Denise Murray of Macquarie University. "The use of English around the world has increased dramatically, bringing both opportunities and challenges for individuals, governments, and English language educators," said Professor Murray.

To meet the challenges and broaden opportunities, the TESOL profession needs to examine its knowledge base, values, and the diverse contexts of English language teaching. Through this examination the profession can ensure a more inclusive, collaborative approach for English language education in the 21st century.

The summit will feature an invited in-person audience of more than 200 industry leaders from around the world who influence English language education policy and practice. These summit delegates will hold high-level strategic discussions on what the future holds for an English language professional and take part in creating a roadmap for countries seeking to update or enhance their English language education policies.

The summit will ultimately produce [a framework](#) for the future of the TESOL profession that will guide policy, practice, and research. Soon after the summit in Athens, TESOL will post a summation of its initial findings. By the 2018 TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo, TESOL will release a comprehensive "call to action" that will outline how summit delegates and participants can contribute to the improvement of the TESOL profession. TESOL will be asking key stakeholders to work with TESOL in achieving its vision.

TESOL President Dudley Reynolds of Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar highlights the importance of an event of this nature:

At a time when educational decision-makers everywhere need a principled understanding of the language competencies required for both global and local success, the TESOL summit promises to provide significant insights into both the content and delivery of effective language teaching. This understanding can be best developed through a deep-dive conversation with people who have their finger on the pulse of education around the world. For me, this is what the summit offers, and why I'm excited to participate with other thought leaders from across the educational spectrum.

Join the Conversation

In an effort to make this landmark event truly global, TESOL professionals and stakeholders from around the world will be able to participate as online summit participants. Through the guided online discussions, online summit participants will provide relative local and regional information pertaining to each theme. Both TESOL members and nonmembers are strongly encouraged to participate in the online discussions before, during, and after the summit, as well as during the live-stream the event. Online discussions will open on 1 December 2016 and will continue through May 2017. Registration to become an online summit participant is free, and space is unlimited.

In Athens, our featured speakers will situate the contextual examples extracted from online discussions and current research to paint a global picture of the current English language landscape. In order to present this information in an organized fashion, each theme will be presented in 15-minute segments through the lenses of the three guiding principles. Then, delegates will participate in facilitated round-table discussions to share their experiences and understandings of each theme, followed by a question-and-answer segment. Online summit participants will have the ability to live-stream all of these face-to-face events in Athens as well as interact with delegates and speakers during the question-and-answer portion of the summit.

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