



A Comprehensive English Language Study of Policy and Practice in Public Schools in Jordan

**USAID Technical Assistance Program
(TAP)**

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Abbreviations and Acronyms..... | 4 |
| Executive Summary..... | 5 |
| I. Introduction..... | 9 |
| 1.1. English Language Teaching in Schools in Jordan | 9 |
| 1.2. The Research..... | 10 |
| 2. An Analysis of Policies Guiding English Language Education in Jordan | 13 |
| 2.1. Higher-Level Strategic Documents..... | 13 |
| 2.2. Policy Documents For English Language Teaching | 15 |
| 2.3. Summary..... | 18 |
| 3. A Review of Policy, Research, and Practice | 19 |
| 3.1. Teacher Capacity..... | 19 |
| 3.2. Relevant Teaching and Learning Materials | 29 |
| 3.3. Testing and Assessments..... | 34 |
| 3.4. Addressing Learning Gaps..... | 37 |
| 3.5. Gender and EFL..... | 39 |
| 4. Summary and Conclusion | 41 |
| References | 43 |
| Annex 1: Some Strategies for Teaching Large Classes | 48 |
| Annex 2: Key Recommendations for Teacher Capacity and Competences | 49 |
| Annex 3: Key Recommendations For Curriculum and teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) .. | 52 |
| Annex 4: Key Recommendations for Assessments | 55 |

Table of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 Grade 8 Student Scores in English national exam, 2018/19 (Elkouz, 2022)..... | 10 |
| Figure 2 Overview of Phases of Study | 12 |
| Figure 3 Interlinkage between Curriculum, Teacher, and Assessment..... | 15 |
| Figure 4 CEFR Language Proficiency Levels of Students..... | 16 |
| Figure 5 Overview of International Examinations (www.cambridgeenglish.org) | 20 |
| Figure 6 CEFR Language Levels of Students and Suggested Language Proficiency of Teachers..... | 21 |
| Figure 7 Elements of Evidence-based Supervision EDT and the QRTA | 25 |
| Figure 8 Recommended Language Proficiency Level of EFL Teachers Linked with Career Stages..... | 28 |
| Figure 9 Proficiency Framework Linked to Positive Washback..... | 36 |

Table of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1 Selection of strategic objectives and projects (NCHRD, 2015) | 14 |
| Table 2 Supervisor Teacher Ratio for Effective Coaching Model..... | 25 |

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| BA | Bachelor Degree |
| BC | British Council |
| CERF | Common European Framework of Reference for Languages |
| CPD | Continuous Professional Development |
| CLIL | Content Language Integrated Learning |
| CSB | Civil Service Bureau |
| CUP | Common Underlying Proficiency |
| DET | Directorate of Examination and Testing |
| EDT | Education Department Trust |
| EFL | English Foreign Language |
| ELCF | English Language Curriculum Framework |
| ESP | Education Strategic Plan |
| HRD | Human Resource Development |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| KG | Kindergarten |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NAF | National Assessment Framework |
| NCCD | National Center for Curriculum Development |
| NSHRD | National Strategy for Human Resources Development |
| NSTPD | National Standards for Teacher's Professional Development |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PISA | Program for International Student Assessment |
| PRESTIJ | The Preservice Teacher Education in Jordan |
| QRTA | The Queen Rania Teacher Academy |
| TAP | Technical Assistance Program |
| TIMSS | Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study |
| TLM | Teaching and Learning Materials |
| TOEFL | Test of English as a Foreign Language |
| UNESCO | The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Technical Assistance Program (TAP), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is a five-year education and youth project that seeks to transform the organizational culture of and improve the abilities within the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Youth to ensure officials can implement desired reforms. The MoE in Jordan is responsible for education from kindergarten (KG) through the end of Grade 12. This study, a collaboration between TAP and the MoE, focuses on English language teaching and learning from KG2 to Grade 12 in public schools in Jordan.

CONTEXT

English language plays an important role in different strategic documents in Jordan. English is considered a language that prepares students to engage in the national and international job market. However, in the last decade, the English language results of students have declined steadily. His Majesty King Abdullah II commissioned the National Strategy for Human Resources Development (NSHRD) 2016–2025 to investigate why the Jordanian education system was not producing the results the Kingdom needed. The NSHRD indicated several issues that needed attention, and the MoE started to work on some of these. These issues include teacher capacity, curriculum, and assessment.

The COVID-19 school closures have compounded pre-existing challenges with English language teaching and learning. The schools were closed for almost two years. Even though the MoE provided distance learning through an education platform called *Darsak* and dedicated two local TV channels to online classes, a lack of technology, internet connectivity, and parental support excluded many students from learning support during school closure (UNICEF, 2022). While parents might have been able to provide support in math and Arabic, many could not provide English language support resulting in a large educational loss for many children.

Yet, several steps have already been made to improve the provision of the English language in KG2–Grade 12. In December 2020, the National Center for Curriculum Development (NCCD) issued a new English Language Curriculum Framework (ELCF), which is yet to be operationalized. Furthermore, several institutions and organizations are piloting different ways to enhance the capacity of English language teachers. Also, from the COVID-19 school closures, different ways of learning and teaching have been explored that could enhance teaching and learning and be helpful in addressing learning loss and learning poverty. The COVID-19 school closure and related learning loss, the already existing learning poverty, and the presence of a new ELCF provides a unique momentum to look at the provision of English language teaching in Jordan.

RESEARCH AIM, QUESTIONS, AND APPROACH

This study aims to gain insight into the design of English language education for students in KG2–Grade 12 in Jordan. It is paramount that the education system addresses issues pre-dating COVID-19 and education loss resulting from COVID-19 school closure while simultaneously operationalizing a new curriculum framework. All this together provides a timely and unique opportunity to carry out a study to evaluate and investigate current policy, curriculum framework, classroom instruction, and practices, and provide recommendations on how to best support English language acquisition in Jordan.

In preparation for this study, an inception report was developed to outline the scope and content. The main research question is:

What is needed to ensure the education system is ready to deliver quality English language teaching in schools in Jordan, particularly after the COVID-19 school closure?

The research team together with key stakeholders formulated several sub-questions focusing on teacher capacity and competences, curriculum and materials, and assessment. Besides these main foci, key stakeholders suggested three other areas of attention. These were the simultaneous development of literacy skills in English and Arabic; the motivation of students and teachers to learn English; and short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to address learning gaps in students' English Language proficiency due to school closures and prior learning poverty.

The research used a collaborative approach, including policy document review, literature review, secondary data sources and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the MoE, the NCCD, and implementing partners collaborating with the MoE and the NCCD. The study aimed to integrate views and perspectives from different stakeholders as well as best practices from similar contexts and reflect on current policy documents. The study findings resulted into a set of recommendations focusing on improving the quality of English language teaching and learning in KG2 to Grade 12 in Jordan's public schools.

CROSS-CUTTING TOPICS

Two main topics appeared throughout the research. The first topic was the language proficiency levels of teachers and students. The second was the post-COVID learning realities and teaching and learning of English.

The English language proficiency levels of many teachers are not at the level to teach all language skills well to students. This has a direct influence on students' English language learning. There is currently no international or well-developed national English language proficiency framework for teachers. Furthermore, the assessments that are used tend to exclude the assessment of writing and oral skills. The lack of well-established proficiency standards directly linked to targeted language skills of students is one important contributing factor to the low English language proficiency of students. The new ELCF is linked to the Common European Framework Reference for languages (CEFR), a well-established and recognized proficiency framework. It, therefore, would be logical to ensure that teachers' English language proficiency is aligned to the CEFR. Research has provided insight into what these levels should be for English language teachers. Using an international framework for language proficiency will help to ensure that students' language levels are ready for the international labor markers. This is a cross-cutting issue as it will apply to teacher training, teacher competences, teacher standards, teacher selection, teacher promotion as well as English language teaching materials

Post-COVID learning realities is the second cross-cutting issue that arose throughout this study. Prior to COVID-19, English language results were already declining and learning poverty existed. The COVID-19 school closure enlarged these learning gaps. It is therefore important to ensure that teaching happens at the level where the students are rather than just teaching the content of the course book. Post-COVID learning realities will require: renewed focus on formative assessment and diverse formative assessment strategies; differentiated learning to ensure students learn at their level; blended learning so that learning can continue beyond the classrooms and students can catch up on learning while no teachers are present. This is a cross-cutting issue as it applies to teacher standards, teacher training, teacher selection, as well as English language teaching materials.

TEACHER CAPACITY AND COMPETENCES

The study found that current teacher capacity and competences do not match the requirements of current classrooms in Jordan. Furthermore, policy documents that relate to English teacher capacity and competences do not align in that older policies do not yet reflect the information of new policies, and sometimes information between policies is incomplete or contradicting.

Teachers' capacity and competences need to be updated in the following areas: English language proficiency; pedagogic skills to teach the new ELCF; pedagogic skills to facilitate learning in large, under-resourced classes of students; and skills to encourage the transfer of skills between Arabic and English. The study provides detailed suggestions on how to update teacher training, supervision and coaching, and teacher appointments and promotions, in addition to ensuring that policy documents are updated and aligned including the needed capacity and competences. The first step would be to update the Teacher Standards for Foreign Language Teachers, including the language proficiency levels and pedagogic skills required to teach the new ELCF in post-COVID learning realities. Based on this, the following also need to be updated: preservice and in-service training, accreditation of training, coaching, teacher placement criteria, and teacher career development guidelines.

CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

Currently, the new ELCF is not yet operationalized in classrooms. The NCCD has started the process to procure a new set of materials. The study found that there are a few areas where the new ELCF still could be refined to ensure that other policy documents, such as teacher standards, include the right competencies for teachers (pedagogic skills as well as language proficiency skills). Furthermore, the study has developed a list of criteria for selecting new teaching and learning materials.

The study found that several stakeholders see Arabic and English as too different to create interlinkages. However, research has shown that languages are interlinked in the brain of multilingual people. While there is a great awareness in Jordan on the 'negative transfer' that can take place from one language to the other, there is very little to no awareness about the positive transfer that can enhance language learning and literacy skills in both languages.

Curriculum and materials are instrumental in recovering learning loss. The study looked at different ways learning loss could be addressed in Jordan. The recommendations include: developing prioritized curriculum including semester-based vocabulary lists; ensuring teachers are able to use formative assessment for learning; capitalizing on blended learning opportunities and expertise in the community; and introducing extensive reading by providing leveled reading books to students through classroom, community, or online libraries.

ASSESSMENT

The NSHRD strategy (National Committee for Human Resource Development, 2015) as well as several of the key stakeholders reported that the way assessment is done in Jordan, particularly the high-stake exam at the end of secondary school influences teaching practices. The focus of teaching moves towards the skills being tested, a negative influence called 'negative washback'. To reverse negative washback, this study provides several recommendations which include developing an assessment strategy that covers a wide and unpredictable sample of skills as this will encourage good teaching practices. For English language proficiency it is important that productive skills such as writing and oral language production are also included in assessment. Furthermore, to ensure that teachers and students are at the needed level, it is recommended that the assessment criteria are based on CEFR.

Assessment also links to teacher capacity and competences. It is recommended that teachers' preservice and in-service training uses assessments based on CEFR as well as selection criteria from the Civil Service Bureau (CSB).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to gain insight into what is needed to ensure the education system is ready to deliver high-quality English language teaching in schools in Jordan, particularly after the COVID-19 school closure. A list of key recommendations emerged following a review of policy documents, contemporary research, new practices in Jordan, as well as engaging with stakeholders at policy and classroom level. The research team discussed these key recommendations with the key stakeholders, who in turn recognized the need for them. The recommendations are as follows:

- Prepare a list of competences needed for teachers to teach English in post-COVID learning realities in Jordan. The competences include language proficiency levels based on CERF and contemporary pedagogic skills for English language teaching, including advanced skills in formative assessment, differentiated learning, and supporting blended learning.
- Update and align policy documents on English language teaching in KG2–Grade 12 in Jordan. These include the ELCF, Teacher Standards for Foreign Language Teachers, Teacher selection criteria used by the CSB, preservice and in-service training for English language teachers, coaching for English language teachers through English language supervisors.
- Develop accredited preservice training for English language teachers based on updated Teacher Standards for Foreign Language Teachers.
- Develop accreditation for in-service teaching training tracks that allow current teachers to update their competences to the needed competences.
- Ensure diverse coaching models and professional development opportunities so as to meet the needs of English language teachers in different teaching and learning contexts in Jordan.
- Link teacher competences and teacher training to clear guidelines for career development for teachers so as to ensure competent English language teachers.
- Ensure that the new ELCF describes well the competences students have to develop in a post-COVID learning environment, with a clear reference to CEFR levels.
- Update the materials selection guidelines to ensure that the new English language teaching materials are appropriate for the current education context in Jordan.
- Update the assessment for English language to include a wide variety of unpredicted skills in the larger assessments.

Chapter 3 develops these recommendations in more detail for each focus area.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Technical Assistance Program (TAP), funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is a five-year education and youth project that seeks to transform the organizational culture of, and improve abilities within, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Youth to ensure officials can implement desired reforms. The MoE in Jordan is responsible for education from kindergarten (KG) through to the end of Grade 12.

In 2018, the MoE launched its five-year Education Strategic Plan to ensure that all children and youth can gain the skills and knowledge to succeed in the knowledge economy of the twenty-first century. Until the COVID-19 crisis, learning outcomes had been improving, but significant inequalities remained by gender and nationality.

I.1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SCHOOLS IN JORDAN

This study looked at English language teaching in the education system in Jordan. The Jordanian education system follows a 2–6–4–2 structure, which indicates the years in each education level. The main stages in basic education are:

- Pre-school (or KG), a maximum of two years.
- Lower primary education, Grades 1–6.
- Upper primary education, Grades 7–10.
- Secondary education, Grades 11 and 12, which has a vocational and academic track.

English language has been part of education in Jordan for a long time (Al-Khatib, 2008; Harrison, 1975; Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021). As English is not spoken in the immediate environment of students, it is considered a foreign language rather than a second language (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Currently, English is a compulsory subject from KG to Grade 12.

The current curriculum materials for primary education, the Action Pack, include a student book, listening materials on a cassette or CD, a workbook, and a teacher's book (Sulaiman & Bani, 2014). For Grades 1–6, there are also flashcards and wall charts. In 2020, the MoE approved a new English Language Curriculum Framework (ELCF) developed by the National Center for Curriculum Development (NCCD). However, the ELCF still needs to be operationalized into the different elements of the education system, including curriculum development, teacher standards, teacher training, and assessment.

From KG until Grade 12, English is taught by a specialist subject teacher who holds, at minimum, a bachelor's degree (BA). Those who want to become English language teachers apply to the Civil Service Bureau (CSB). The CSB sets an exam for candidates that includes English language subject knowledge (70 percent of the grade) and English language skills (30 percent of the score). However, due to a shortage of teachers, these recruitment criteria are not always followed. Dedicated English language supervisors supervise teaching. At the time of the study, there were 111 supervisors responsible for about 11,000 English language teachers throughout the country.

Teachers use several assessment techniques to monitor student progress. These techniques include continuous assessment, monthly tests and quizzes, and exams at the end of each term. Teachers prepare assessments, which contribute to the final report card of a student. At the end of secondary school, there is a summative exam known as the *Tawjihi*. This exam includes English language. The minimum passing rate is 40 percent which allows students to apply for university.

1.1.1. English Language Results

The Jordanian government conducts annual assessments for Grades 4, 8, and 10 to gain insight into education quality. Based on the scores, the students are divided into different performance levels:

- Basic Level – students score between 0–29 percent on their exam.
- Partial Mastery Level – students score between 30–49 percent.
- Full Mastery Level – students score between 50–69 percent.
- Advanced Level – students score between 70–100 percent.

Average English language test scores have gradually decreased over the years. Figure 1 displays the results of Grade 8 students in 2018/2019. About half the students possessed sufficient or advanced mastery in reading (51 percent) and writing (55 percent), and about 43 percent in speaking. However, only about half of the students partly mastered or mastered basic skills only; at this level, students cannot use English in the national and international marketplace. The results of the English Proficiency Index further backed up these findings: In 2022, Jordan was ranked 90 of 111 countries for which there is data. Of the 12 countries in the Middle East, Jordan is eighth (Education First, 2022).

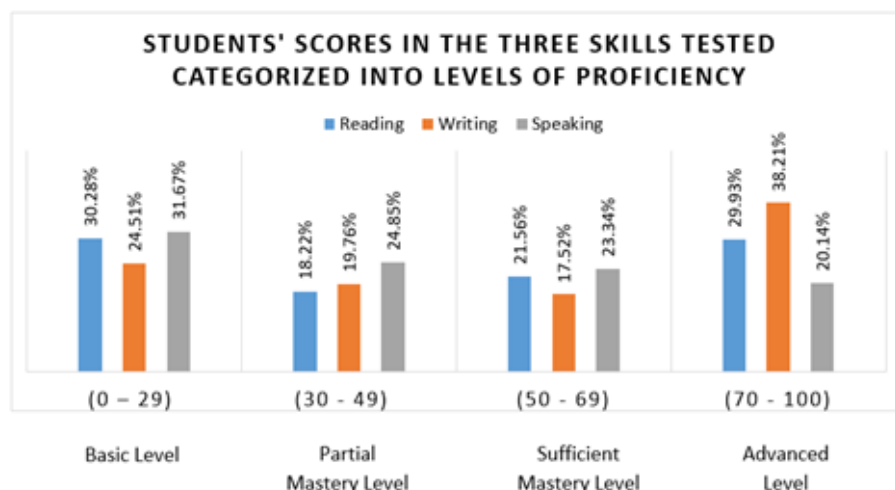


Figure 1 Grade 8 Student Scores in English national exam, 2018/19 (Elkouz, 2022)

On top of declining results, in March 2020, the Government of Jordan closed all schools to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (UNICEF, 2020). The MoE continued to provide education during the pandemic, shifting to distance learning by developing an education platform called *Darsak* and dedicating two local TV channels to online classes. Both tools provided explanations and resources for the four primary subjects (math, Arabic, science, and English) for first to twelfth-graders. Despite these efforts, many students were unable to benefit for different reasons (UNICEF, 2022).

1.2. THE RESEARCH

This study aimed to gain insight into the design of English language education for students from KG2 until Grade 12 in Jordan. The education system must address issues that were present before COVID-19 and education loss resulting from COVID-19 school closure while simultaneously operationalizing the new ELCF that includes investigating teacher training, curriculum development, classroom practices, and assessment. This background context provided a timely and unique opportunity to evaluate and investigate current policy, the curriculum framework, classroom instruction, and

practices, and provide recommendations on how to best support English language acquisition in Jordan. These recommendations are compiled in Annexes 2–4.

1.2.1. The Research Questions

TAP identified the research questions after an initial literature review and in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the MoE and the NCCD (see section 1.2.2. outlining the research approach). The overarching research question was the following:

What is needed to ensure the education system is ready to deliver quality English language teaching in schools in Jordan, particularly after the COVID-19 school closure?

As the main research question was still quite broad, the team formulated several sub-questions to focus on topics identified as most important:

1. How can teachers develop their capacities and competencies to deliver quality English language education to students?
2. What guidelines and recommendations are needed to ensure relevant teaching and learning materials for English are selected and adapted?
3. How can assessment improve learning of all skills mentioned in the ELCF?
4. How can the simultaneous development of literacy skills in English and Arabic be harmonized and enhanced to develop positive synergy between the two languages?
5. How can the perception of the irrelevance of English by some teachers, students, and parents be changed for the positive?
6. What strategies can be implemented in the short, medium, and long term to support addressing learning gaps in students' English language proficiency due to school closures and prior learning poverty?

The study focused primarily on the first three sub-questions and, to a lesser extent, sub-questions 4–6.

1.2.2. Research Approach

The research team comprised international and national researchers from TAP. The team worked collaboratively, integrating the diverse views and perspectives of key stakeholders in Jordan as well as best practices from similar contexts.

The team used a collaborative research approach to engage stakeholders throughout the study to validate findings and discuss implications. This was done to ensure the relevance of the study to the stakeholders as well as ensuring stakeholder validity of the study. The team conducted the research in two phases (see Figure 2). In phase one, the team developed a road map for the study, detailed in an inception report. The inception report also included a brief literature review and findings from consultative meetings with stakeholders from the MoE, the NCCD, British Council, and the Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA), in addition to principals, teachers, and students from three different schools. The team provided the draft inception report to the MoE and the NCCD and subsequently included their feedback. Phase 2 included a review of current literature and policy documents and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the MoE and the implementing partners – mentioned above – working on EFL teaching.

Early in the process, the MoE appointed a technical committee with the mandate to review the inception and final reports, and develop an action plan based on the report's recommendations.

Throughout the whole study, TAP maintained regular contact with the technical committee, keeping them informed of progress and soliciting further directions for the study.

| Phase 1 | Phase 2 |
|---|---|
| Output: Inception report | Output: Research Report with recommendations |
| Data collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial literature review. • Consultative meetings with key stakeholders. • Semi-structured interviews with 3 principals, 24 English language teachers, and 50 students. • Fifteen classroom observations. | Data collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review. • Policy document review. • Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the MoE and Implementing Partners. |
| Validation of findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical committee feedback on progress and preliminary findings. • Key stakeholders validate findings of final report. | |

Figure 2 Overview of Phases of Study

2. AN ANALYSIS OF POLICIES GUIDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN JORDAN

Several policies and other key documents guide English language teaching and learning in Jordan. This chapter contains a review of these policies and documents, and — where relevant — a comparison into the extent to which they interlink and are aligned (see Chapter 3 for a review of the policies against contemporary research and best practices).

The following are the main policies and documents that operate in the various institutions responsible for the delivery and monitoring of English language teaching in Jordan:

- The National Strategy for Human Resources Development (NSHRD).
- The Education Strategic Plan (ESP).
- The English Language Curriculum Framework, 2020 (ELCF).
- The General Framework for Teachers' Policy.
- The National Standards for Foreign Language Teacher.
- The National Test for Education Quality Control (Directorate of Examination and Testing).
- Supervision.
- The National Arabic Literacy Strategy.

2.1. HIGHER-LEVEL STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

The NSHRD, developed following a Royal Order, lays out several problems observed in teaching in Jordan. These include:

- Modernize the Curriculum and assessment frameworks
- Establish National Centre for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Modernize the Basic and Secondary curriculum.
- Modernize and align the end of secondary school exam¹ and other key assessments
- Improve teachers' selection process.
- Establish an Initial Teacher Education Program.
- Develop comprehensive in-service teacher training.
- Mobilize families and parents to support learning at home.
- Mobilize families and parents to support learning in schools.

The NSHDR outlines strategic objectives and projects to address the above challenges. Table 1 pulls out the strategic objectives and projects most relevant to topics discussed in this study.

¹ in Jordan known as Tawjihi

| Strategic Objective | Project |
|---|---|
| Quality – Modernize the curriculum and assessment frameworks through establishing an independent body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a National Centre for Curriculum and Assessment. • Modernize the basic and secondary education curriculum. • Modernize and align the <i>Tawjihi</i> exam and other key assessments. |
| Quality – Improve the quality of the workforce at all levels of Basic and Secondary provision, with an emphasis on teacher training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve teachers' selection process. • Establish an initial Teacher Education Program. • Develop comprehensive in-service teacher training. |
| Mindset – Mobilize families and parents to support learning at home and in schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilize families and parents to support learning at home. • Mobilize families and parents to support learning in schools. |

Table 1 Selection of strategic objectives and projects (NCHRD, 2015)

Linked to the NSHRD, the MoE developed a five-year national education strategic plan (ESP). The ESP outlines challenges with the Jordanian curricula. Although not mentioned separately, these challenges relate directly to English language teaching (Ministry of Education, 2018: 50) and include modernizing the curricula, assessment, and secondary school exam. To address the challenges, the MoE indicated that it will “review and revise curriculum for all school stages to include local and global concepts (...), Develop systems for monitoring and evaluating educational outcomes for each of the various stages of education.” (Ministry of Education, 2018: 51)

In response to the recommendations of the NSHRD 2016-2025, the NCCD was established in April 2017. The envisioned goal of the NCCD is that educational reform would be more focused on making use of international best practices while at the same time the curricula and textbooks for early childhood, basic and secondary education would be in line with the Jordanian education philosophy and objectives, religious, and national constants. The NCCD is also to coordinate with the authorities responsible for training teachers to implement curricula, including educational materials, assessments, and evaluation procedures.

The NSHRD has been directly guiding improvements in education. The MoE through the ESP provided an indication of what is going to be focused on. The NSHRD also indicated the role the NCCD would play on leading curriculum reform, indicators for assessments, curriculum materials development, and assessment. At the time of this study, the NCCD was established and had taken on the responsibility of curriculum reform and curriculum materials development.

2.2. POLICY DOCUMENTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Several policy documents guide different aspects of English language teaching and learning. These interlinked documents cover curriculum and curriculum materials, teachers and teacher support, and assessments/exams (Figure 3).

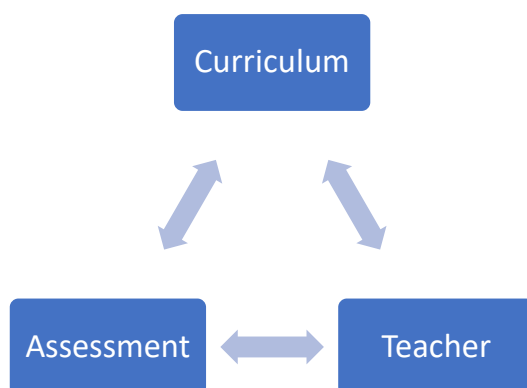


Figure 3 Interlinkage between Curriculum, Teacher, and Assessment

For example, when curriculum guidelines specify certain English language levels or skills for students, documents on teacher standards need to reflect this. Most likely, English language levels and competences for teachers will need updating. In the same way, assessment guidelines will need to be updated to reflect these changes and ensure that all skills are assessed at the right level. When one document is updated, all other documents need to be updated to ensure clear interlinkage and alignment.

2.2.1. The English Language Curriculum Framework and National Teacher Standards

The most recently updated document is the ELCF, released in the second half of 2020 (NCCD, 2020). The focus of this new framework is to plan English language acquisition strategies so that students can compete internationally. Furthermore, it aims to provide a roadmap for “the learning trajectory for teachers to empower learners to engage in every aspect of their learning process directly and actively” (NCCD, 2020:5). The ELCF included standards and performance indicators for KG through to Grade 12. The ELCF guides the selection of English teaching and learning materials and indicates the English language levels that students need to reach. It also informs assessment standards as well as assessment practices. With the development of the new ELCF, the goals and objectives for English language teaching in Jordan have been updated but not yet operationalized.

Two significant changes in the new ELCF are not yet reflected in documents guiding teachers and assessments. First, the ELCF now links student English language levels to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). This is an internationally recognized framework for describing foreign language proficiency and provides a broad, comprehensive overview of foreign language performance at different levels of ability (OECD, 2021). Section 3.1.1 will describe CEFR in more detail. Figure 4 shows the new ELFC CEFR levels for students (personal communication, August 2022).

| End of Grade | CEFR Level |
|--------------|------------|
| 3 | A1 |
| 6 | A2 |
| 10 | B1 |
| 12 | B2/C1 |

Secondly, the ELFC has increased student language skills from four to six: 1) listening, 2) speaking, 3) reading, 4) writing, 5) extensive reading, and 6) viewing and presenting. For each skill, there are general goals (standards), and for each standard, there are learning outcomes with corresponding performance indicators.

The document National Professional Development Standards for Foreign Language Teachers does not yet reflect these two changes. Furthermore, neither the in-service and preservice training for teachers nor the recruitment guidelines and assessments take these changes into account. If policy documents are not updated, teachers will not be adequately prepared to teach the new ELCF. Likewise, these changes are also not yet accommodated in documents and practices that guide teacher supervision teachers.

2.2.2. Teacher Recruitment, Training, and Supervision

In 2011, the MoE developed and adopted a General Framework for Teachers policy. The policy addresses recruitment policies, preservice training, and teachers' continuous professional development and career paths.

In Jordan, the MoE recruits teachers in cooperation with the CSB. The following candidate criteria are used to select teachers (Ministry of Education, 2018:15):

- Secondary grade point average, or GPA (10 percent).
- Year of graduation (35 percent).
- Academic qualifications (10 percent).
- Year of employment application (25 percent).
- Civil service examination results (20 percent).

The civil service exam for English language teachers includes an assessment of reading and writing/grammar. Based on the new ELFC, this exam needs to be updated to ensure that teachers have the required language level and skills to teach English well.

The minimum requirement for becoming a teacher is an undergraduate degree. However, while about seven in ten teachers in Jordan hold a bachelor's degree or higher, they are often not specialized in education (Ghawi & Massoud, 2022). Furthermore, there is no comprehensive or clear system for preservice teacher training nor a bachelor program for becoming an EFL teacher in primary or secondary education. In addition, preservice courses on offer have limited places. Moreover, as taking the course is not a requirement, many teachers choose not to due to financial constraints. BA programs for English language teachers and in-service and preservice programs must be aligned with the requirements of English language teachers in Jordanian schools to ensure that qualified teachers are present in classrooms. This includes curricula with competency statements directly linked to the new ELCF and the to-be-updated standards for English teachers.

Supervisors provide on-the-job training and support. An education supervisor is responsible for supporting teachers in matters related to pedagogy and teaching. There are supervisors specialized in EFL. At the time of the study, there was about one supervisor for every 100 teachers (see section 3.1). Supervisors use standard documents to provide supervision and support to teachers. These documents, as well as on-the-job training and support, need to be in line with the most current ELCF and the to-be-updated National teacher standards.

2.2.3. Assessments and Exams

The Directorate of Examination and Testing (DET) prepares national tests to measure the level of skills acquired by students benchmarked to previously set performance indicators. The tests are for Grades 4, 8, and 10 and include English language. The results provide the different stakeholders in education with information on the quality of English language teaching.

The national English test consists of 36 multiple-choice questions testing skills in reading and functions of writing and speaking. An example of testing functions of speaking using multiple choice could be the presentation to students of an imaginary conversation that they have to read. Then they have to select the correct sentence for the imaginary conversation from four options. No actual speaking is required.

Besides the national test, there is also a summative exam at the end of secondary school called the *tawjihi*. The *tawjihi* acts as a national evaluation strategy. The minimum pass rate is 40 percent which, if achieved, allows students to apply for university. English is part of the *Tawjihi*, i.e., all students should reach a certain level of English to pursue higher education.

Currently, neither the framework guiding the National Test for English nor the framework for the *tawjihi* are aligned with the new ELCF. This update is required to ensure all six language skills are assessed as well as the assumed CEFR language level at the end of secondary school.

Besides the alignment of policy documents, feedback from different stakeholders and research indicates the importance of ensuring that oral skills are included in the national assessment. The washback of focusing only on reading and writing and using a multiple-choice format seems to have a significant influence on teacher practices (see also section 3.3). This was reported by key stakeholders as well as in the NSHRD.

On a separate note, Jordan also participates in the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA (Mullis et al., 2016). To date, English language has not formed part of this assessment, but PISA has announced the inclusion of foreign language assessment from 2025 (OECD, 2018). PISA also uses the CEFR as its reference framework. For Jordan, this highlights the importance and urgency of updating all policy documents (and related practices) to ensure that materials, teachers, and assessments align with the international assessment. While it is not the primary purpose of English language instruction in Jordan to do well in international assessments, if Jordanian students were to perform well it would signal that students are ready to interact internationally and enter and compete in the international job market and business world — a major achievement for Jordan.

2.2.4. The National Arabic Literacy Strategy

Finally, a note about the National Arabic Literacy Strategy. While initially it might seem odd to mention this strategy in research on English language, recent studies have shown that languages do not exist in isolation in peoples' minds. Many studies show how literacy skills transfer from a person's first language to the second language. These include literacy skills such as decoding, metacognitive skills such as knowing a symbol's present meaning, comprehension strategies, and reading strategies (Ahlberg, 2020; Chung et al., 2019; Durgunoğlu et al., 1993; Koda & Zehler, 2008; Shakkour, 2014; van Ginkel, 2008).

The National Arabic Literacy Strategy would provide an excellent first step in interlinking EFL and Arabic and strategically encouraging the transfer of skills and enhancing EFL acquisition rather than viewing both languages as separate subjects with little in common. By extending the National Arabic Literacy Strategy to English (and potentially other languages), a stronger foundation for both languages can be built and instilled in students in Jordan (also see section 3.2.5 Learning Two Languages Simultaneously).

2.3. SUMMARY

Higher-level strategic documents indicate existing problems in ensuring quality English language education. There are different policy documents related to teaching and learning of English language in Jordan. Currently, these documents do not yet align with each other. The ELCF is the newest policy document, and it is needed for other policies to be updated to that quality education can be provided to students. These policies and documents include National Standards for Teachers, the Teacher Recruitment Policy, and documents relating to supervision, tests, and exams.

Furthermore, there currently is no link between academic programs that prepare English language teachers and, for example, ELFC and (an updated) national teacher policy. It is highly recommended that this interlinkage and alignment is created to ensure that teachers have competences to implement the national curriculum for English language.

3. A REVIEW OF POLICY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

This chapter presents key findings from a literature review of studies on English language teaching (relevant to the context of Jordan) and Jordanian studies on English language teaching and different aspects of the education system. This chapter also includes a policy review and primary data collected through interviews, discussions, and school visits with key stakeholders, principles, teachers, and students.

The research team interacted with key stakeholders throughout the study. Key stakeholders included the MoE, the NCCD, and implementing partners, who all participated in formulating the focus areas of this study, providing information on teaching English, and validating the findings of this study. This level of collaboration ensured the study direction remained relevant to the MoE and NCCD and perceived as important and relevant by other stakeholders.

3.1. TEACHER CAPACITY

Teachers' competences play an essential role in the success or failure of an education program. An analysis of the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) highlights this link between teacher capacity and student performance. The data showed that Jordanian students with higher average scores were taught by teachers with higher levels of education in the specific subject they taught, assuming higher levels of capacity of the teachers (Ghawi & Massoud, 2022). Throughout the research, teacher capacity is mentioned as an area that needs attention. The comparison of policy documents, the information on current practices as well as the information provided by literature review and key stakeholders showed that alignment across policies and practices is needed to ensure the needed capacity and competences for teachers.

Various studies and documents regarding teachers, in particular English language teachers in Jordan, indicated several issues requiring attention. Furthermore, key stakeholders often mentioned the capacity of English language teachers in Jordan during the research's inception phase and ongoing interactive dialogue sessions. The frequency signals the importance of teachers' capacity for high-quality education. Key stakeholders, research and best practices identified the follow topics as needing attention:

- The English language skills of teachers.
- The pedagogic competence of teachers, including their ability to: 1) teach large classes, 2) teach students with varying skills and knowledge, 3) use assessment to inform teaching and remediation, and 4) facilitate learning after COVID-19 school closures.
- The quality and availability of training, coaching, mentoring, and supervision for teachers.

Each of these topics will be expanded on below.

3.1.1. English Language Skills of Teachers

The language level of teachers is key to student success in English (Enever, 2011). Research on foreign language teachers in primary schools indicates that a minimum entry level of B1 is needed (as per the CEFR), with C1 more desirable for a teacher to be fully functional (Enever et al., 2009; Enever, 2011; Institute of International Education, 2012; Pflepsen & Backman, 2012). When teachers lack proficiency in the language they teach, it becomes more difficult for students to learn the new language.

Several countries have minimum language standards for EFL teachers. One common measure used is the CEFR, developed by the Council of Europe. The CEFR is an internationally recognized framework

for describing foreign language proficiency. It can be used across languages and contexts, i.e., it is language- and context-independent (Harsch & Malone, 2021). The CEFR provides a broad, comprehensive overview of foreign language performance at different levels of ability (OECD, 2021). The framework has six levels of proficiency. For each level, there is a comprehensive description of the competences necessary for communication. The focus is thus on communication and, for this reason, the CEFR is often described as “socio-cognitive” meaning that it focuses on communicative language activities (socio) and communicative language competences (OECD, 2021).

In addition to the CEFR, there are other international frameworks and level indicators, such as the Cambridge English Scales and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Figure 5 displays the levels of different frameworks against each other. International frameworks like CEFR enables foreign language teachers and learners to measure progress against one internationally used scale (Boeckmann et al., 2012).

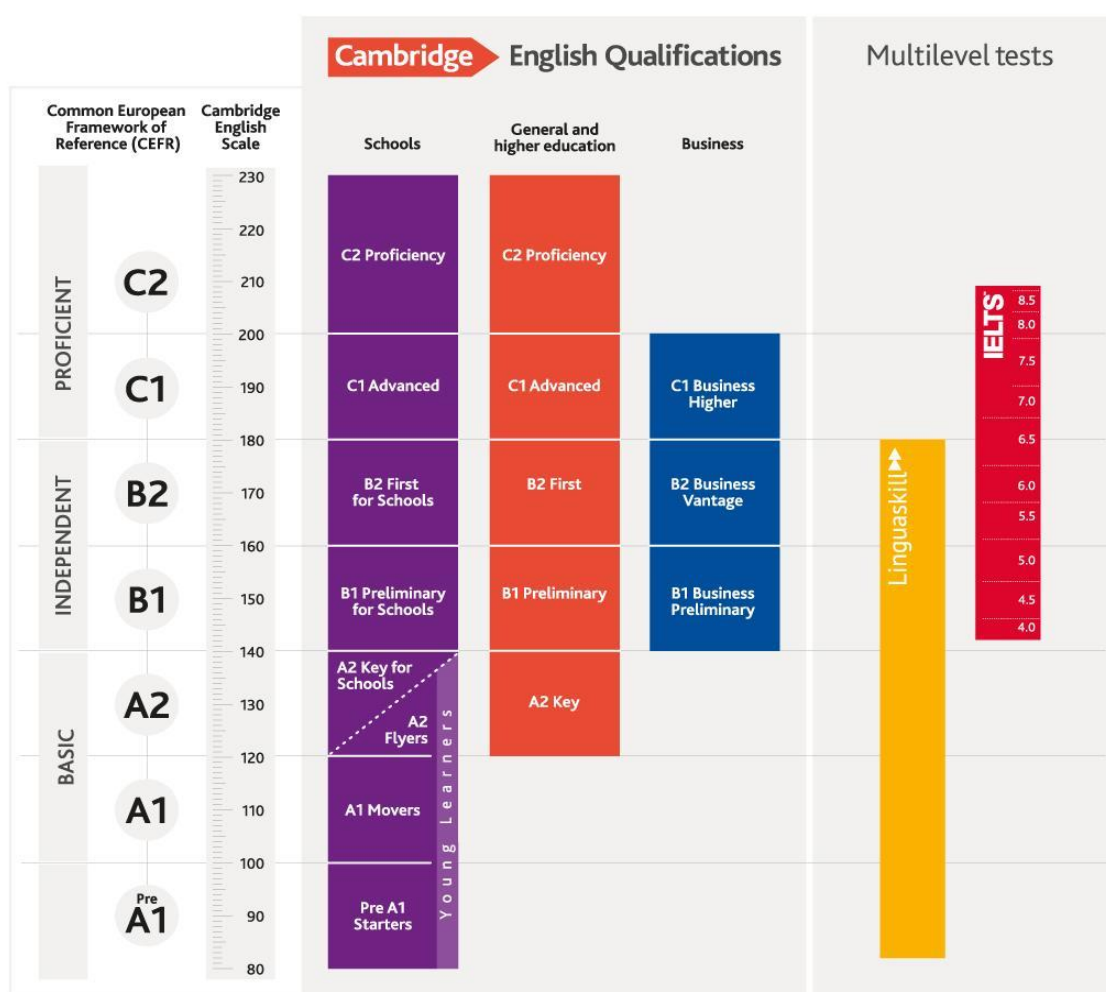


Figure 5 Overview of International Examinations (www.cambridgeenglish.org)

Input from different key stakeholders in Jordan indicated that the English language skills of teachers need improvement, particularly their productive skills (i.e., writing and speaking). Several teachers interviewed indicated that it is difficult to practice their productive skills as, for example, there are no people in their immediate environment with whom they can practice speaking in English. Other research confirms that many teachers in Jordan lack the necessary capacity in English language. For example, Elkouz (2022) measured the pronunciation of EFL teachers in Grade 8 in Jordanian public

schools using the CEFR phonological control scale. The study results indicated that Jordanian EFL teachers' phonological levels were either A2 or B1. English language supervisors interviewed in the same research confirmed that these results also reflect their impressions. Furthermore, a study carried out by the British Council and the MoE in 2018 found that most teachers scored in the lower levels of B2, while hardly any teachers scored at CEFR level C1 or C2 (British Council, 2022). About 8 percent of the teachers scored level A2, while 33 percent scored level B1.

The new ELCF assumes that students reach specific CEFR levels by certain grades. It would therefore be logical to use the CEFR to measure teacher competencies as well. Figure 6 presents suggested proficiency levels for English language teachers by grade, developed from research on ELF teachers and the new ELCF.

| Grade | Student Language Level (revised ELCF) | Suggested Level of English Language Teachers |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Grades 1–3 | Level A1 | B1 |
| Grades 4–6 | Level A2 | B2 |
| Grades 7–10 | Level B1 | C1 |
| Grades 11 and 12 | Level B2 | C2 |

Figure 6 CEFR Language Levels of Students and Suggested Language Proficiency of Teachers

The suggested levels for teachers would require teachers to be at least two levels above students. Teachers in Grades 1–3 would have at least a level B1 (for all skills), while those in Grades 11 and 12 would function at level C2.

It is not yet common in Jordan to use internationally recognized language proficiency assessments for English language teachers, such as TOEFL or IELTS (Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021). Instead, Jordanian EFL teachers must pass an English language test before they practice teaching in the field. This English language test falls within the responsibility of the CSB and is a necessity of employment for each teacher. The test is computerized and does not include productive skills. Several key stakeholders expressed that this assessment is too easy and does not match the language skills needed to teach English well. They suggested that the assessment should also include productive skills, as is common practice in other countries.

3.1.2. Pedagogic Competences for Delivering English as a Foreign Language

EFL pedagogy in Jordan can suffer from the following: teacher-centered learning; an uncomprehensive focus on the whole curriculum; an unbalanced focus on stronger students (often seated in the front rows); challenges using formative assessment to improve student learning; and difficulties teaching large classes. These challenges were reported by key stakeholders, highlighted in the NSHRD, and backed up by several studies (Alhabahba et al., 2016; Bengtsson et al., 2021a, 2021b; Ghawi & Massoud, 2022; Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021). Some of these issues are due to teachers not meeting the minimum requirements in the teacher standards for foreign language teachers. For example, schools in refugee camps do not always have qualified teachers (Bengtsson et al., 2021b, 2021a). In remote areas, teachers do not always possess the minimal competences for language teachers (Ministry of Education, 2018). As indicated before, there is also still a need for a solid preservice program ensuring that teachers enter the classroom with qualified skills. The QTRA Teacher Education Professional Diploma is already working towards ensuring that teachers enter the classroom with developed pedagogical skills.

Large Classes

Teaching English to large classes is important for EFL teachers in Jordan, with stakeholders in this study referring to ratios in large classes of 1 teacher to 60 or more students. Teaching EFL to large classes brings specific challenges, such as inadequate time to practice language skills and provide feedback to students, specifically for oral skills (Anderson, 2016). This phenomenon is not limited to Jordan (Shamim & Coleman, 2018). Several strategies recorded from different contexts could help teachers (Anderson, 2016; Shamim et al., 2007; Shamim & Coleman, 2018). Annex 1 presents several of these strategies.

Besides the language competences, there is a general consensus that teachers need updated pedagogical skills for teaching EFL. These updated skills need to include contemporary skills to teach EFL and the new curriculum framework for English as well as pedagogic skills that match specific Jordan realities of the post-COVID school closure learning loss, pedagogic skills to teach EFL to classes with high teacher student ratio, classes that lack facilities needed to teach all language skills well and facilities that enhance differentiated and blended learning. Besides these, it is necessary that teachers become aware of how Arabic, and English interact with each other in students' minds and how the interlinkage between the two languages can facilitate language learning in both languages and how transfer teaching enhances learning in both languages.

In most European countries an EFL teacher for primary levels needs to be qualified at bachelor's level in two-thirds of the education systems. In lower secondary education, they need to be qualified at bachelor's level in around half of the education systems and at master's level in the other half. At general upper secondary level, a master's degree is the minimum level of qualification in almost two-thirds of the education systems. The teacher training programs are focused on the subject and often include specific language proficiency levels and focus on pedagogical skills. Different stakeholders in Jordan recognize that Jordan is not yet providing the needed prerequisite training to new teachers to ensure they start fully qualified as EFL teachers. While different efforts have already started towards improving the teacher education program, there are still a number of aspects that need attention and alignment. Several initiatives have already started, and it is recommended that they continue after a review against the key recommendations of this study, with the view of an expansion to ensure that all new EFL teachers have access to an accredited BA and MA program focusing on EFL.

3.1.3. Teaching Students with Different Skills and Knowledge

After the COVID-19 school closures, it is paramount that teachers recognize student levels and can adjust the teaching and learning processes to cater to student needs. While this was already important before COVID-19, the prolonged school closures exacerbated already-existing learning poverty in English language, and only a small percentage of the students have the necessary prerequisite knowledge to be successful in their grade (TAP, 2022 unpublished).

Formative assessment and differentiated learning are two key components to help students catch up on learning loss and redeem learning poverty. Both focus on learning processes and the needs of students and help students perform better in school (Westbroek et al., 2020).

Formative Assessment

While formative assessment is a broad concept understood differently by different people, it is generally understood to mean a focus on using assessment for learning (Berben et al., 2020; Westbroek et al., 2020). Formative assessment involves continuous monitoring of the teaching and learning process to positively influence the process. It provides information about student achievement — e.g., whether

they are reaching a lesson's learning goals — which the teachers and/or learners then use to decide on the next steps in the learning process (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

Formative assessment is most of the time informal yet informative. If lessons are well-organized, formative assessment is typically already part of it. The assessment includes reviewing what students learned previously, providing feedback to students as they work on exercises and assignments, and evaluating the lesson toward the end (Berben et al., 2020). Formative assessment can also be done more formally through either paper-based or oral assessments. The assessments can be prepared by the teachers or provided by the government or a recognized education institution. Often the latter formative assessments are standardized periodic assessments used to determine to what extent students have mastered knowledge and skills of a subject. Teachers, schools, and supervisors use the results to improve learning during the school year by providing specific interventions.

Formative assessment for learning might be operationalized differently with younger and older students, as older students have the ability to reflect on their learning process and express what is needed or what the learning issues are. The extent to which teachers apply assessment for learning depends on their own skills in this area and the feasibility of suggested approaches given time and resource limitations (Westbroek et al., 2020).

While the concept of formative assessment is theoretically understood by most key stakeholders in Jordan, it is often not applied in the classroom. Teachers either do not use formative assessment or do not use the outcomes to improve students' learning (Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021).

Differentiated Learning

Differentiated instruction refers to the practice of adjusting the teaching and learning approach to accommodate the needs of different students in the same class. A curriculum has three elements where differentiation can happen: content, process, and products (Tomlinson, 1995, 2017):

- **Content** - the knowledge and skills students need to develop.
- **Process** – how teachers use differentiated instruction in the classroom.
- **Products** - different forms of assessment to gain insight into students' readiness for certain tasks and their progress on different learning objectives.

There are two different ways to use content in differentiated learning (Bouwman et al., 2013). The first is called 'convergent differentiation'. This kind of differentiation assumes that all students need to meet the same learning goals. The lesson starts with the same instruction for all students. Afterward, the students work in groups with the teacher providing extra instruction and support to weaker students. During this time, stronger and faster students receive extra tasks and exercises fitting their level and interest. The lesson ends with all students coming together again. The second way of differentiation is 'divergent differentiation', where the focus is on the individual student. All students have their own learning objectives and level of learning and follow individual programs. The teacher provides support to the students at their own level.

Looking at the context of Jordan, the convergent differentiation model would be most suitable. First, the teacher starts their lessons with the whole class. Following this, they provide general instructions to different groups to start working on their tasks. Next, the teacher provides additional support to the groups that need it while the other students work independently or in pairs on their own exercises. Toward the end of the lesson, the class comes back together, and the teacher provides feedback on how the students worked together and what they worked on. Finally, the teacher closes the lesson with a process and product evaluation (Bouwman et al., 2013). The convergent model would allow the teacher to work on one topic and take students through the topic at different levels. Even though it

requires well-skilled teachers, it is less demanding than the divergent model, where each student learns at their own level and pace.

Teachers need specific knowledge and skills to apply differentiated learning in classrooms. They must have good class management skills, the ability to think about different ways to activate learning and can ensure students are actively engaged in learning. In addition, the teacher needs to be able to teach students to work well in groups and regulate their own learning. Finally, teachers need to be able to manage the whole class working in groups, as well as provide specific and differentiated support to smaller groups. Lesson plans should include instructions for different groups in the classroom.

Besides pedagogical skills, teachers also need to have information on individual students' progress to group the students well. That means that information on students' needs to be available, including assessment results that identify their key skills and knowledge. Here is where differentiated learning clearly links to formative assessment.

While teachers implement differentiated learning in the classroom, Bouwman et al. (2013) stress the importance of ensuring that differentiated learning is done as a team of teachers in the school, with the school leader providing leadership and a clear guidance document that is regularly monitored, evaluated, and improved.

3.1.4. Coaching, Mentoring, and Supervision

Research from different contexts indicates that direct support to teachers through coaching and mentoring significantly impacts student learning outcomes (Bagby et al., 2022; Kraft et al., 2018; Pflepsen, 2019; USAID, 2014, 2021). Through coaching, teachers receive onsite and job-embedded professional development and gain the skills and knowledge needed to improve instruction. There are different coaching models, ranging from responsive coaching to direct coaching. In the responsive coaching model, the teacher is more reflective and responsive and has a lot of say in the learning process. In direct coaching, much of the lead comes from the coach, who guides the teachers to use the method as intended, enforcing a certain approach. Direct coaching can benefit teachers with limited skills when specific approaches need to be implemented in the classroom. In between these two ends of the continuum is 'balanced coaching', where there is space for the teacher to respond to the coach's suggestions, while the coach ensures they implement specific approaches and practices. Often the initial focus is on direct coaching; over time, coaches will invite teachers to respond to their own needs and be self-reflective. The balanced model has been used successfully in low- and middle-income countries (Pflepsen, 2019).

In addition to individual coaching, different studies discuss group coaching. For example, in Afghanistan, coaches and teachers established teacher learning circles (TLC) in schools, meeting once a month to discuss issues with early-grade reading (USAID, 2021). Local schools established TLCs using their own resources, providing a space to meet and water to drink. This makes TLCs an effective professional development model to scale up at little cost. The study from Afghanistan also indicated that TLCs need a high level of commitment from school leadership and teachers. The study emphasized the importance of good leadership, concluding that "it is important to have a trained and committed lead-coach who follows rules and procedures, and robust methods of running the discussions." (USAID, 2021, p 2). The general observation was that TLCs provide centers for excellence where teacher competences are improved.

In Jordan, several projects have worked on coaching and mentoring for teachers. For example, the Education Department Trust (EDT) and the QRTA worked with teaching supervisors to develop evidence-based supervision approaches (Churches et al., 2019). The program included four key elements, displayed in Figure 7.

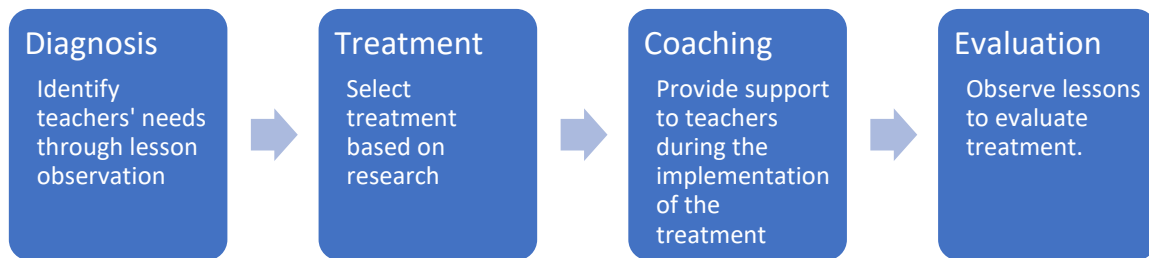


Figure 7 Elements of Evidence-based Supervision EDT and the QRTA

Representatives from both the MoE and EDT described the coaching program as successful during interviews, and the MoE of Jordan intends to extend it further. The Supervision Department has already indicated it will change the role of supervisors to coaches.

Two crucial elements need to be taken into consideration when further developing the coaching program:

1. **The supervisor-teacher ratio.** There is a significant difference between the current reality of supervisor-teacher ratio and the EDT coaching program (see Table 2). For the EDT/QRTA program to be successfully scaled up, the MoE would have to employ an additional 1,000 supervisors. This has major budget implications. Yet as the EDT/QRTA model has been successful in improving teachers' competences to teach English well, it is necessary to look at the piloted model and find creative ways to make it fit the budget and HR realities. One creative way that is already being tried out by EDT is the Senior Teacher Program, where a senior teacher in the school is equipped with English language coaching skills.

| | Supervisors | EFL Teachers | Ratio |
|----------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| Current situation | 111 | 11,000+ | 1:99 |
| EDT/QRTA Coaching Program | 1,110 | 11,000+ | 1:10 |

Table 2 Supervisor Teacher Ratio for Effective Coaching Model

2. **Supervisor job descriptions.** Job descriptions of supervisors need to be updated to reflect the new approach, where their role is one of a coach. The supervision department is already looking into this.

3.1.5. Initiatives Working on Teacher Capacity and Competences

At the time of this research, the QRTA, the British Council, EDT, and UNICEF had already run or were running several initiatives addressing issues for EFL teachers in public schools.

The Queen Rania Teacher Academy

The MoE tasked the QRTA to create a postgraduate professional teaching diploma for classroom and subject teachers, including English teachers.² Key stakeholders are positive about the program's positive impact on the teachers' capacity (personal communication, 5 June 2022), and the program has been expanded to four universities in Jordan.

The British Council

The British Council (BC) supports EFL learning in education in Jordan with various partners. Initiatives include:

- Running 'Connecting Classrooms', a multiphase Global Teachers Continuous Professional Development (CPD) project with the MoE, UNRWA, and military schools. Over the past 12 years, it has aimed to support the development of twenty-first-century skills, establish student-centered partnerships with schools in the UK, and work with many English teachers and school leaders.
- Offering various English teacher training programs. Some programs respond to the refugee crisis and the expansion of the double-shift school system. Another MoE-accredited English teacher training program has been launched based on a pilot run during COVID-19.
- Strengthening the higher education system and supporting graduate outcomes.
- Producing research and insight pieces for the MoE, including needs assessments, landscape scans, and baselining.
- Running a large-scale People, Policy, and Practice Research to identify actionable recommendations related to English (students, teachers, employers).

The British Council works with the MoE to improve English language in-service teaching skills and contribute to better student learning outcomes. The collaboration aims to enhance the employability, resilience, and attainment of other twenty-first-century skills, which will, in turn, contribute to economic prosperity, social stability, and national security. Their objectives are to:

- Improve the teaching skills of 2,000 English language teachers (two stages over two years).
- Improve the leadership skills of teacher educators to set up, develop and sustain communities of practice.
- Increase access to and use of high-quality digital learning resources with in-class observation.
- Develop the understanding of teachers, teacher educators, teacher associations, and the MoE of the effectiveness of peer-to-peer collaborative learning for teachers.
- Increase English language provision and access for all groups.
- Improve systems of in-service CPD provision via accreditation of English language training and thought leadership/advocacy work.

The Education Development Trust

The Education Development Trust (EDT) is an international not-for-profit organization working to improve education outcomes worldwide, including Jordan. In Jordan, EDT has piloted an evidence-based supervision approach that focuses on understanding the needs of teachers through classroom observation. EDT trains supervisors to select suitable treatments to address teachers' weaknesses and provide the support needed through coaching and mentoring. Supervisors then use classroom

² Lower grade primary schools have class teachers except for the subject English. Beyond lower primary there are only subject teachers.

observation again to evaluate and assess the impact of the treatment implemented. This supervision program has been successful and EDT is working with the MoE on expanding this model to include a larger number of schools.

UNICEF and Learning Bridges

The MoE, with the support of UNICEF, launched Learning Bridges in September 2020. Learning Bridges is a national blended learning program to help students from Grades 4 to 9 recover and accelerate their learning following the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program links printed materials with online resources to provide weekly activities based on core curricula. This innovative approach links textbooks and technology, school and home, and subject knowledge with applied learning. Every child in Grades 4 to 9 receives an A3 printed activity pack weekly with guidance on how parents can support them. Every activity pack has a QR code linking to additional online resources. Embedded audio files provide accessibility for children with visual impairments or difficulty reading. A cross-curricular approach accelerates learning: student activity packs link key learning outcomes across Arabic, English, mathematics, and science for each weekly curriculum. Access to a range of carefully chosen media resources means students can work at their own pace and recover lost learning.

The blended learning program has shown that different approaches are needed to be able to support all teachers and students in Jordan, depending on access to technology and levels of support at home and school. Learning Bridges shows that it is possible to improve the English language teaching skills of teachers and that diverse approaches are needed to ensure all teachers are reached using the most efficient resources.

3.1.6. Recommendations for Improving Teacher Capacity

The following are recommendations for improving teacher capacity and competences:

- Concerning the English language proficiency of EFL teachers in Jordan:
 - Just as the new curriculum framework for English is linked to the CEFR, extend the use of CEFR to teacher capacity and competences. Figure 8 provides a research-based suggestion of the minimum and desired language proficiency levels of teachers in relation to the students' language levels and teacher career stages

| Grade | Student language level (new ELCF) | Minimum EFL teacher language level | Desired EFL teacher language level | Teacher career stages according to Foreign Language Teacher Standards |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Grade 1-3 | A1 | B1 | B2 | Beginner Teacher |
| Grade 4-6 | A2 | B1 | B2 | Proficient |
| Grade 7-10 | B1 | B2 | C1 | Highly Accomplished |
| Grade 11 and 12 | B2 | C1 | C2 | Lead Teachers |

Figure 8 Recommended Language Proficiency Level of EFL Teachers Linked with Career Stages

- The pedagogic competencies of EFL teachers in Jordan should be measured by their ability to:
 - Teach using research based EFL pedagogy.
 - Teach six skills as stipulated in the new English curriculum framework.
 - Teach in the context of post-COVID classroom and learning realities, including assessment for learning, differentiated instruction, and blended learning.
 - Teach large classes.
 - Teach language in high- and low-resource environments.
 - Interlink language skills development in Arabic and English with a focus on metacognitive skills and metalinguistic knowledge, and ‘teaching for transfer’
- Ensure all policies, assessments, and training for EFL teachers are directly linked to the recommended CEFR levels for teachers.
- Ensure teacher training programs include the following topics: tailoring pedagogy for large classes; managing large classes; teaching students of varying abilities and motivation in large classes; assessing students in large classes; working with materials adapted to large classes; teaching students by dividing them into smaller groups.
- Ensure the Teacher Standards for Foreign Language teachers in Jordan should refer to the specific competences required to teach English to classes with many students.
- Ensure that supervisors have the linguistic and pedagogic skills and capacity to provide the needed coaching. This includes reviewing, building on, and expanding piloted coaching support programs.
- Develop a specific preservice program for EFL teachers in Jordan while ensuring that BA English students wishing to teach take pedagogic modules and graduate with a minimum CEFR level B2.
- Update selection criteria and procedures for new teachers and in support of career growth for employed teachers.

Annex 2 Key Recommendations for Teacher Capacity and Competences has the specific recommendations for each category.

An additional note on the recommendations

As the provision of support to English Language Teachers includes many players and MoE departments, and government offices, it is important that regular meetings are held to ensure that programs and efforts are aligned and stay aligned.

It is recognized that these are recommendations that will come into practice gradually. Prioritizing the recommendations on impact and use of resources is important. The most likely process is to update the Foreign Language Teacher Standards including the key recommendations of this study and aligning the training programs (preservice and in-service), the coaching, as well as the teacher placement criteria and career development with the teacher standards as well as with each other and the curriculum framework for English.



The process and outcomes will need to be relevant for teachers already in the system and those who will be new to the system. It will include developing learning tracks relevant, appropriate, and accredited for those EFL teachers already employed. It will also involve ensuring that the trainers of the in-service learning track have the language proficiency and pedagogical skills to provide the trainings. Similarly for the preservice training, content of the training and BA English need to be aligned with the needed language proficiency skills for beginning EFL teachers as well as the pedagogical modules need to update including the recommended skills for EFL teachers.

The initiatives on teacher training and support that are already in progress like PRESTIJ, EDT and British Council programs should be reviewed considering the recommendations and accommodate these in appropriate and innovative ways.

3.2. RELEVANT TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

The current English language curriculum materials used in schools – the Action Pack series– are based on the previous ELCF, they do not yet match the new English language curriculum framework. The Action Pack was introduced in the school year 2001/2002, initially in Grades 1, 3, and 4. Learning materials include a student book, listening materials (on a cassette or CD), a workbook, and a teacher's book (Sulaiman & Bani, 2014). There are also flashcards and wall charts for Grades 1–6. Several content analysis studies reviewed different aspects of language learning and the social and cultural content of these materials (Al Bzour & Al-Jamal, 2021). The studies concluded that the English language national curriculum does not fully satisfy today's labor market needs (Ministry of Education, 2018; Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021), and provided helpful insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the series.

At the time of this study, the NCCD is preparing to procure new EFL materials. While a list of criteria for the materials has been developed, one of the sub-questions of this study is to identify additional criteria if required. The following are important to new teaching and learning materials:

- The focus of TLM on post-COVID schooling issues (learning gap, differentiated learning, formative assessment, and blended learning).
- The alignment of TLM with the new curriculum framework, including:
 - Introduction and development of six skills rather than four.
 - CEFR language levels as per the new curriculum framework.
- The applicability of TLM to different educational contexts, including:
 - Low- and high-resource classes and students.
 - Larger and smaller teacher-student ratios.
 - Students who miss the relevance of learning English.
- Considerations for teaching English to young students.
- How the TLM seek the simultaneous development of literacy skills in Arabic and English.

Each of these topics will be explored below.

3.2.1. The Post-COVID Education Reality and New Curriculum Framework

The new ELCF was approved in 2020 when the impact of COVID-19 on education was still unknown. In Jordan, schools were closed for about two years. While there are no up-to-date figures on students' English language performances, the pre-COVID learning poverty has likely increased. The 2022 national diagnostic assessment of Grade 4–6 student levels in Arabic and math indicates that many students did not have the necessary basic skills to succeed in their grade. For both subjects, it is quite likely that students were able to get some support in their environment (e.g., homes and communities) when schools were closed. However, teachers and students interviewed as part of the assessment indicated that English language is much less known by people in students' home environments and many students did not receive any support. Some students were able to access lessons online, but their teachers indicated that most students found it hard to understand the teachers on the online learning platform. Very few interviewed students indicated that they accessed the internet themselves. The ones that did used YouTube to watch videos in English. Based on the diagnostic results for math and Arabic and interviews with teachers and students, it seems reasonable to assume that the English language learning gap has increased even more during the COVID-19 school closure.

Post-COVID learning realities is a cross-cutting issue throughout this report as it influences teacher training, teacher competences, teacher standards, teacher selection, teacher promotion, student assessment, and English language teaching materials.

Prior to COVID-19, the English language results were already declining and learning poverty existed. However, COVID-19 school closures created larger learning gaps amongst students. For that reason, it is important to ensure that teaching happens at the level students are at, rather than just teaching the content of the course books according to the grade students are in.

These post-COVID learning realities mean that teachers, students, and materials need to help students to learn at the right level. This includes the use of:

- Formative assessment – Teachers need an intensive focus on formative assessment and to diversify formative assessment activities beyond what is 'usual'. That means ensuring that:
 - Teachers have enhanced skills in continuous assessment.
 - Activities in student books and worksheets help to assess where students are and what is further necessary to move them to the next level.
 - Students develop skills in self-assessment and peer assessment.
- Differentiated learning – Teachers have the skills to facilitate differentiated learning in diverse classroom settings (rural, urban, with many students, and in both well- and less-equipped classrooms). Teaching and learning materials should also facilitate differentiated learning as well as students having learned to work in smaller groups at different levels.
- Blended learning – To catch up on learning loss, learning needs to continue beyond the classroom, i.e., at home and/or in the community. Teachers, materials, parents, students, and communities need to be ready to facilitate this blended learning.

3.2.2. Teaching and Learning Materials Matching Curriculum Framework

The new ELCF introduces two new language skills: 1) extensive reading and 2) viewing and presenting now complement 3) listening, 4) speaking, 5) reading, and 6) writing. New materials should provide ample opportunity to practice all six skills while concentrating on the 'productive skills', particularly speaking, which is currently the weakest. Materials should ensure that opportunities to practice skills apply to the different contexts throughout the country (see different contexts in below section 3.2.3).

3.2.3. Different Education Contexts

Different stakeholders and studies reported the following three contexts as most relevant to the selection of suitable teaching and learning materials in Jordan: 1) classroom size (teacher-student ratios); 2) classroom resources (low- and high-resource classes) and environments of students.; 3) student motivation to learn English and parental support.

Classroom Size

TLM can facilitate or hinder teaching in large classes. Materials better suited for large classes will offer students more opportunities to learn. (See in addition section 3.1.2. for how classroom size relates to teacher competences).

The following is a summary of practical tips for TLM provided in literature on teaching a foreign language to large classes (Anderson, 2016; Shamim et al., 2007; Shamim & Coleman, 2018; UNESCO, 2006):

- Small groups of students can do the activities and exercises by themselves.
- Clear instructions should guide students on new topics and how to do an activity.
- Materials should cater to different learning styles and levels (differentiated learning).
- Materials should train students to give feedback and engage in peer assessment.
- Teacher guides should show how to focus on different students in the class.
- Supplementary materials such as flashcards should be large enough to be seen by all students in large classes.
- Classes with a high teacher-student ratio can use additional, tailored materials.

- Each lesson/activity in the teacher guide should have specific tips for large class settings and/or classes with students of different levels.

Student Motivation and Parental Support

TLM should help overcome student lack of motivation to learn English. However, current materials do not sufficiently engage students, report different stakeholders and studies.

How a student's motivation and perception of the status and relevance of a language impacts language learning is well recorded in research. Research shows that when a language has low status or students perceive it as less valuable, it takes them longer to reach the desired language threshold level (Nikolov, 2006). In some areas of Jordan English can be perceived as having less value in daily life, which affects language learning (NSHRD). Stakeholders report that parents encourage students to focus only on the aspects that are assessed at the end of the secondary school exam (see section 3.2.5 for more detail). Interestingly, the UK and the USA also face similar issues with foreign language learning. Many parents and students do not perceive foreign languages as relevant; in most places they go, people speak their language.

A child's age also seems to be relevant to their motivation for learning a language. When children start learning a language young (age seven and below), it has the potential to awaken a lifelong interest in foreign languages. Yet, when children grow older their enthusiasm for the foreign language declines, most likely as they realize that it is hard work, and it takes time to learn a new language well. Also, when children move to higher grades, learning becomes less playful, and the curriculum becomes more focused on exams (Lasagabaster et al., 2014, Enever, 2011, Dörnyei, 2019).

3.2.4. Teaching English to Young Students

Learning a second language at an early age differs from starting later. Younger students:

- Are generally more interested in stories, objects, and events around them (particularly when aged 5–7 years old).
- Can still collaborate with others in tasks, engage in communicative exchanges, and take turns.³
- Learn languages more intuitively compared to older students.
- Have a shorter attention span (particularly 5–12 years old).⁴
- Are still developing their first language, including syntax, phonology, pragmatics, semantics, and literacy skills (Hsieh & Chapman, 2021).

Teaching and assessing EFL in the early grades should consider these opportunities and differences (Johnstone, 2002; Mihaljevic-Djigunovic, 2014; Muñoz, 2014; Nikolov, 2009). Pedagogical approaches, teaching and learning materials, and assessment should consider the developmental factors of students. For example, it is important to ensure that the items, format, and procedures of an assessment are appropriate to the development of students.

³ In comparison, when students grow older, about 9 or 10 years old, they tend to be able to read for information. Finally, when they are about 11 or 12, they start understanding abstract topics and concepts (Gao, 2019).

⁴ An assessment longer than the attention span of students would negatively influence the outcome.

3.2.5. Learning Two Languages Simultaneously

When children learn a new language, the new language and their first language interact. While it is commonly known that the first language influences the second,⁵ research also shows that learning a second language influences the first. This process of two (or more) languages interacting has been called the ‘integration continuum’ (Cook, 2003). The phrase ‘multi-competence’ describes a language user’s knowledge of both their first and second language (Cook, 2003).⁶

The interaction of languages within the brain has been expressed in the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) model. Many studies have been conducted to understand this interlinkage of languages in the brain, showing that transfer takes place between different languages at different levels, including conceptual elements, metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies, pragmatic aspects of language use, specific linguistic elements, and phonological awareness (Cummins, 2017). Research found that literacy skills being developed in one language strongly predict corresponding skills in another language acquired later in time (Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Netten et al., 2011; Verhoeven & Perfetti, 2011). Also, many studies provide evidence for cross-language transfer of reading comprehension (August & Shanahan, 2008; van Ginkel, 2008; Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). This is regardless of language typology. Thus, in the language learning process, different languages interact in dynamic ways. Furthermore, several skills, including literacy-related skills, transfer across languages in the learning process and as learning progresses.

There is thus great potential for using the interaction between learning Modern Standard Arabic and English to improve EFL teaching in Jordanian schools. Currently, schools teach these two languages separately, autonomous from one another. Teaching tends to focus on the differences rather than the similarities. While there is no similarity in script or language family (Arabic is a Semitic language while English is an Indo-European language), there are similar concepts and aspects, and metacognitive skills and strategies which could be interlinked to enhance learning in both. Other contexts have shown that positive transfer between different languages is possible and enhances language learning (Asfaha et al., 2009; Atar, 2018; Cook, 2003; Piper & Ginkel, 2016).

3.2.6. Recommendations for Reviewing the Curriculum and Materials

Review the new ELCF and ensure that it provides sufficient guidance and space for addressing learning gaps:

- Indicate very clearly the minimal required competences for students to be successful in the next grade. This could include:
 - Vocabulary lists students are expected to be familiar with at the end of each grade.

⁵ The phrase ‘interlanguage’ describes a language user’s knowledge in a language other than their mother tongue/first language.

⁶ One question that was raised during the preparation of this study is to what extent learning two languages at the same time can be difficult for students, particularly the younger students. Research on this topic shows that languages are interlinked in the brain in multilingual people and multilingual people’s brains develop in different ways compared to someone who speaks only one language. The common underlying proficiency model developed by Cummins (2017) has been helpful to understand the relationship between different languages in one person’s brain. In general research mentions positive aspects of multilingualism of more developed meta cognitive skills amongst other things. It is also true that negative transfer can take place, in that the second language influences the first, or aspects of the first language transfer in unhelpful ways to the second. The important thing is to be aware of this and capitalize on the positive transfer.

- Key competences in the six skills focused on in the new ELCF.
- Ensure the ELCF offers sufficient guidance for differentiated learning, formative assessment, and blended learning.
 - Include examples on how to help students learn at home, in class, digitally and offline for each of the six language skill.
- Clarify extensive reading as a separate skill and guiding teachers, supervisors, and students how to develop these skills well:
 - Remove minor inconsistencies in language.⁷
 - Use leveled reading books.
 - Include specific learning statements for extensive reading.
 - Provide guidance on the assessment of extensive reading.

The Teaching and Learning Materials should:

- Consider post-COVID learning realities and specifically cater for formative assessment, differentiated learning, and blended learning.
- Align with CEFR language proficiency levels and provide students with the opportunity to practice all six language levels.
- Be applicable for different contexts, including large classes, urban and rural schools, high- and low- resourced classrooms, and varying levels of student and parental motivation.
- Be suitable to the age of students.
- Enhance existing interlinkages between Arabic and English in language teaching.

Annex 3 provides further recommendations for the curriculum and teaching and learning materials.

3.3. TESTING AND ASSESSMENTS

3.3.1. The Impact of Washback

The NSHRD as well as several of the key stakeholders reported that the focus on assessments in Jordan — particularly the high-stakes exam at the end of secondary school — focuses teaching on skills being tested rather than the whole curriculum (National Committee for Human Resource Development, 2015). While some schools and universities have included different forms of assessment, such as presentations and project-based assignments, the traditional test remains the main kind used for English language (Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021). The result is ineffective English language teaching and learning in schools and universities, which in turn influences English language teaching competencies (Queen Rania Teacher Academy, 2021).

The effect of language assessment on teaching and learning is called ‘washback’ or ‘backwash’ (Rahman et al., 2021). Many countries and students have reported washback since the 1990s (Beikmahdavi, 2016; Green, 2013; Qian Xu, 2018.). Studies on washback often distinguish between the extent or intensity

⁷ Sometimes extensive reading is listed as a separate skill while the general impression is that it is considered a sub skill of reading.

of washback and the direction of the washback, i.e., whether it is beneficial or damaging to the teaching and learning process. The intensity refers to the degree to which behavior is adjusted toward the test. There is a tendency for a high-stakes test to have a high adjustment of participant behavior. From interviews with key stakeholders, it seems that the intensity of washback in Jordan is high, and the direction seems to be toward damaging teaching, narrowing down to the skills and test format used in the end of secondary school exam.

Teachers, parents, and students all play a role in washback, with the latter two often requesting a focus on skills required for passing exams (interviews with stakeholders, echoing the findings of Green 2013). Indeed, the perception of test takers, rather than the test designer, determines the extent of washback. Other issues also influence washback, depending on the situation at hand, as Green (2013:49) explains:

“If, for example, teachers are failing to integrate speaking activities into their classes in response to the introduction of speaking tests, causes can be sought in test design (is too little weight given to speaking skills? Is the speaking section too easy?) or in pedagogic systems (do teachers lack training in teaching speaking?). If causes are correctly identified, suitable changes can be introduced (test revision, teacher training)”

The question is, then, how to ensure that washback is beneficial to the teaching and learning process, encouraging the proper forms of teaching and learning. A well-designed test should encourage good teaching, focusing on the long-term teaching goal. However, a poorly designed test might encourage a focus on relatively few aspects of language learning; it will hinder long-term learning goals.

Test developers play an important role in the direction of washback. A test design that covers a wide and unpredictable sample of skills encourages teachers and learners to cover a wide range of skills in lessons. One useful area for further research would be to investigate the specific factors which lead to positive washback across all language skills from the perspective of teachers, students, and other key stakeholders. Once the key factors are identified, an effective communication strategy would need to be implemented explaining how a different approach to assessments could result in better learning outcomes, in turn leading to better access to the labor market, locally and internationally.

3.3.2. CEFR and Positive Washback

Clear proficiency scales and frameworks like the CEFR can also inform teaching, learning, and assessment and lead to positive washback.



Figure 9 Proficiency Framework Linked to Positive Washback

Figure 9 shows how curricula and goals can be derived from the CEFR. Teaching and learning materials can be designed to reflect the curricula goals and the stages in the CEFR. The continuous formative assessment and feedback can be oriented towards the CEFR and curricula goals, while self- and peer-assessments can use the CEFR self-assessment grids. The summative assessment investigating whether students have reached learning outcomes can align with the CEFR. The results of the summative assessment will evaluate whether teaching and learning activities have led to the intended goals (Harsch & Malone, 2021).

3.3.3. Assessing Young Learners

Assessing young language learners (aged between 5 and 12) warrants special consideration due to their unique age-related and environmental characteristics (Gao, 2019; Hsieh & Chapman, 2021). Younger children have shorter attention spans; when an assessment is longer than their attention span, it can adversely impact their performance. Furthermore, younger students up to age 8 or 9 have limited working memory capacities. If these students have a task involving several activities and a limited timeframe, it will adversely impact their performance. For example, an assessment task requiring very young learners to listen to stimulus materials, process the information, and recall and reproduce source materials might not be age-appropriate (Hsieh & Chapman, 2021).

The CEFR was not developed with young learners in mind, which has prompted criticism for some time. However, this issue has been addressed over the last few years with the Council of Europe adding a bank of descriptors focusing on young learners (Council of Europe, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Harsch & Malone, 2021).

3.3.4. Recommendations for Assessments

To reverse negative washback, this study provides the following recommendations:

- Develop an assessment strategy that encourages positive washback on classroom practices for all six skills. Such an assessment strategy needs to:
 - Build on further research into factors resulting in positive or negative washback in Jordan.
 - Address (potential) weaknesses in teachers' skills.
- Link all assessments to the CEFR (as the curriculum does) to ensure high-quality teaching and the desired language proficiency levels.
- The National Assessment Framework (NAF) for EFL should align with evidence-based practices of assessment for foreign language teaching, to encourage positive washback.¹ This can be developed through:
 - Well-designed tests that focus on long-term teaching goals to encourage good teaching practices.
 - Tests that include a wide and unpredictable sample of skills, encouraging teachers and learners to cover a wide range of skills in lessons.
 - Assessments that take the age of students into consideration. Younger children have shorter attention spans, and when an assessment is longer than their attention span, it can adversely impact their performance.
- Review the relevant language and pedagogic skills of teachers (see section 3.1 for more information).

Annex 4 has the specific recommendations for each category related to assessment.

3.4. ADDRESSING LEARNING GAPS

Students in Jordan have not acquired the level of English outlined in the curricula. This learning poverty results from several causes (NSHRD), most recently two years of COVID-19 school closures. While there are not any up-to-date figures on students' English language performance, it is very likely that the learning gap has enlarged. This expectation is based on the results of the diagnostic assessment conducted in 2022 (see section 3.2.1.) The MoE has raised the question of how best to address such a learning gap, particularly when resources supporting English language learning are not always available for many students as they or their parents do not know where to search or do not have internet access to stream videos.

3.4.1. Vocabulary Lists

Several studies investigate learning loss and remedial strategies for language learning among different groups of students (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020; Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, 2022; Shinwell, Defeyter, Frye, & Defeyter, 2017; Snowling & Hulme, 2006; World Bank Group, 2021). Research has shown that vocabulary is a helpful indicator of language proficiency (Nation, 2006; Waring & Nation, 2004). By identifying what vocabulary students should know in each semester of each grade, different exercises and activities can be developed for them to work on in school and at home.

Nation (2006) recommends that language students learn high-frequency and academic vocabulary, particularly in the early stages of language learning. In the early stages, their language use depends heavily on the number of words they know. When students know about 3,000–5,000 words, they can read authentic texts in English. Before that time, leveled or graded reading books are needed. When

students encounter the words often, they learn them better. Nation and Wang (1999) suggest that ten repetitions of words are necessary for students to retain the word and its meaning, but more repetitions are better.

Combining vocabulary lists with prerequisite skills for each grade and semester would allow teachers to help students work in small groups or at home to catch up on missed knowledge. Furthermore, by using level reading books, students can practice reading in their own language to reinforce the vocabulary they learned, as well as learn new vocabulary through the stories (Waring & Nation, 2004).

3.4.2. School Leadership Capacity

In addition to remedial strategies, improving education quality requires improving school leadership capacity and creating a learning and professional growth system in schools. Educational results improve when school leadership can guide the implementation and monitoring of education programs (Department of Education and Skills, 2011; Ministry of Education Culture and Research, 2022; Vernooy, 2006). Gaining insight into what is needed would help develop strategies to support the learning gap of students and improve the quality of education in general.

3.4.3. Language Support

Several studies explore how language support in and outside of school encourages language acquisition (Department of Education and Skills, 2011; Hanada et al., 2021; World Bank Group, 2021). The Government and implementing partners tried several ways of supporting students during the recent COVID-19 school closure, with various degrees of success depending on context (Education Development Centre (EDC), 2020; Engzell, Frey, & Verhagen, 2020; Smith, 2021; UNICEF, 2022). For example, making use of supplementary reading materials for students, online and offline games, worksheets, possibly songs, cartoons, radio programs, TV programs that are playful and fun, and yet have an element of learning.

Furthermore, to enhance literacy in English and Arabic, it is worthwhile to link the languages to enhance the transfer of skills from one language to the other. This could be done by teachers' demonstration and/or reminding students of the different metacognitive strategies that apply to reading in both languages (see section 3.2.5. for more details).

3.4.4. Recommendations of Strategies to Address Learning Gaps

The following recommendations are suggested for addressing the learning gaps:

- Review the new ELCF to ensure it provides sufficient guidance and space for addressing learning gaps.
- Add specific competences for extensive reading to the new curriculum framework for English.
- Build on current pilots on leveled reading books, reviewing them according to the findings of this study, then updating and expanding pilots to different schools.
- Ensure that TLM are available that support learning recovery strategies.

Annex 3 has specific recommendations for each category related to curriculum and materials.

3.5. GENDER AND EFL

While there was no specific research question about gender and English, the study still included a brief review as there are a few interesting aspects that need attention.

3.5.1. Academic Performance of Girls

In late 2010, the MoE of Jordan established a Gender Department to implement the National Strategy for Gender Inclusion. The strategy aims to achieve gender equity at the central government, directorates and schools by working on related policies, plans, projects and programs. Great strides have been made on the inclusion of females in education and gender parity is just about achieved (Tweissi et al. 2014). On several assessments across multiple subjects, girls outperform their male peers. For example, female students scored better than male students in all subjects tested in the PISA test in 2018. In addition, girls performed better than boys in reading literacy, mathematics, and science, with achievement gaps as large as 51 points (OECD, 2018b). Girls also achieved better in the National Test conducted by the Jordanian Ministry of Education for Grades 4, 8, and 10 (Ministry of Education).

3.5.2. Availability of Female Teachers

The availability of well-qualified female teachers impacts education outcomes. Within Jordan's cultural and religious context, people might only consider certain employment sectors as suitable for women. However, they deem teaching a suitable occupation for both women and men. Discussions with key stakeholders highlighted how women often find a teaching job easier to combine with family responsibilities due to the part-time nature of the work. However, for the same reason, teaching can be less attractive to male teachers as the part-time position does not provide sufficient income to meet the financial needs of their families, meaning they often have to work a second job. This finding is corroborated by literature (Tweissi et al. 2014).

The greater availability of qualified female teachers positively affects the quality of teaching received by girls. According to stakeholders and backed up by literature, there are more qualified female teachers resulting in more competition for jobs (Ministry of Education, 2018). As a result, female teacher selection often comes down to merit and qualifications (Tweissie et al., 2014). On the other hand, there tend to be fewer male teachers. Male teachers are thus selected to meet a need rather than on merit and qualifications. As female teachers often teach in girls-only schools and the lower grades of mixed schools, girls tend to receive better-qualified teachers, positively affecting their learning (Xiong, 2010).

Furthermore, the enhanced qualifications, motivation, and job satisfaction of female teachers positively influence their teaching techniques and dedication (Tweissie et al., 2014). This teaching standard provides their students with a better learning experience, in turn impacting test scores (see section 3.5.1. above on the academic performance of girls).

3.5.3. Gender Representation in Teaching and Learning Materials

Studies of teaching and learning materials indicate that there is an imbalance in gender representation, favoring boys. As per international best practices, the criteria for new materials must include gender balance, equality, and equity (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), 2019; RTI International, 2015).

3.5.4. Recommendations for Gender and English Teaching and Learning

- Ensure new teaching and learning materials are gender sensitive following the guidelines of the gender policy.
- Focus on male teachers to ensure they provide the same level of education to boys as female teachers do to girls. This will require, for example, a review of career prospects and financial considerations.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study aims to gain insight into the design of English language education for students in KG2- grade 12 in Jordan. It is paramount that the education system addresses issues present before COVID-19, deals with education loss resulting from COVID-19 school closure, and simultaneously operationalizes a new curriculum framework that includes investigating teacher training, curriculum development, classroom practices, and assessment. All this together provides a timely and unique opportunity to conduct a study to evaluate and investigate current policy, curriculum framework, classroom instruction, and practices to best support English language acquisition in Jordan. The main research question for this study is:

What is needed to ensure the education system is ready to deliver quality English language teaching in schools in Jordan, particularly after the COVID-19 school closure?

The research team formulated several sub-questions focusing on teacher capacity and competences, curriculum and materials, and assessment. Besides these main foci, key stakeholders suggested three other areas of attention. These were:

- 1) The simultaneous development of literacy skills in English and Arabic,
- 2) The motivation of students and teachers to learn English.
- 3) Short-, medium-, and long-term strategies to address learning gaps in students' English Language proficiency due to school closures and prior learning poverty.

The study found two cross-cutting issues that need attention:

- 1) The language proficiency levels of teachers and students. The recommendation is to extend the CEFR language levels used in the new ELCF to teachers and include this in the standards for foreign language teachers.
- 2) Strategies for teaching and learning in post-COVID education reality with larger differences between students and many students being far behind where they should be for their subject and grade. These strategies include formative assessment, differentiated learning, and blended learning.

Besides this, policy documents related to English need to align with each other, with current research, and with best practices for teaching English in contexts like Jordan. These documents include the new English Language Curriculum Framework, the Teacher Standards for Foreign Languages, the National Teacher Policy, the National Assessment Framework, and the Gender Policy.

The study confirmed that many teachers in Jordan lack the capacity and competences to teach the current and new English language curriculum. Several aspects need to be addressed, including teachers' language proficiency levels and pedagogic skills, particularly the ability to address learning gaps and provide differentiated learning. The Teacher Standards for Foreign Languages need to be updated and used for training and a guide for career development.

The study found that teacher education needs attention. Several good initiatives have already started and need to be further developed, piloted, expanded, and brought to scale. There is still a lack of accredited EFL preservice training that ensures all new teachers have the language skills and pedagogic competences to teach EFL well in the diverse contexts of Jordan. The different academic routes through which people can become EFL teachers need to be reviewed and updated to match the needed CERF language skills and pedagogic skills to teach EFL in a post-COVID learning environment. These include the different English BA programs through which people become EFL teachers. It is necessary to provide a focused in-service training with clear tracks and milestones for teachers who are already in the teaching profession to update their competences and link it to career steps. Some initiatives have already started and would need to be reviewed and updated using the recommendations of this study. It is important that there are diverse ways for teachers to engage with in-service training so that,

regardless of context, teachers can update their skills. The CSB plays an important role in ensuring appropriate criteria are established for EFL teachers and the selection tools are updated to ensure teachers start with the needed language proficiency levels and pedagogic skills.

With regards to curriculum and materials, the study found that there are a few areas where the new ELCF still could be refined to ensure that other policy documents, such as teacher standards, include the right competencies for teachers (pedagogic skills as well as language proficiency skills). Furthermore, the study suggested a list of criteria to include when selecting new materials. These criteria include the main issues important to the teaching of English in the context of Jordan and take into account the learning loss that has taken place.

Also, the study found that Arabic and English are assumed to be unrelated languages, yet research showed that languages are interlinked in the brain of multilingual people. While there is a great awareness in Jordan of the 'negative transfer' that can take place from one language to the other, there is very little to no awareness of the positive transfer that can enhance language learning and literacy skills in both languages.

The study looked at different ways of addressing learning loss for English in Jordan. The recommendations include: prioritized curriculum including prerequisite skills for each semester and grade; matching vocabulary lists to help teachers to assess students learning through formative assessment and provide them with needed learning content, capitalize on blended learning opportunities and expertise in the community, introduce extensive reading by provide leveled reading books to students through classroom libraries, communities libraries or online libraries.

With regards to assessment, the study found that the high-stake exam at the end of secondary school influences teaching practices. The focus of teaching moves towards the skills being tested in that exam. The negative influence on teaching practice is called negative washback. To reverse this negative washback, this study provides several recommendations which include developing an assessment strategy that covers a wide and unpredictable sample of skills as this will encourage good teaching practices. For English language proficiency it is important that productive skills such as writing and oral language production are also included in assessments. Furthermore, to ensure that teachers and students are at the needed level, it is recommended that the assessment criteria are based on CEFR.

Assessments also link to teacher capacity and competences. It is therefore recommended that teachers' preservice and in-service training uses assessments based on CEFR as well as selection criteria of the CSB.

To conclude, the study has been instrumental in bringing together different aspects of teaching and learning English language in Jordan. The interactions with the MoE, the NCCD, and the different implementing partners showed that there is a good level of awareness of the different issues, despite it not always being clear how to address them. There was only space for the main studies and issues to be reviewed for each of the many topics in this study. Yet, according to the feedback on the study from different stakeholders, the impression is that the findings are realistic, and recommendations are needed. Also, amongst the MoE, the NCCD, the CSB, and implementing partners there is a realistic willingness to address the issues identified in this report.

As action plans start to be developed, more issues will arise that will need to be addressed. Some actions can be started and completed soon, while others need one, two, or several more years to implement. Yet, starting today means that as of today a direction of change is starting.

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ANNEX I: SOME STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING LARGE CLASSES

(Sources: Anderson, 2016; Shamim et al., 2007; Shamim & Coleman, 2018)

Think, pair, share – This is a pedagogical strategy where the teacher asks learners a question, for example, when checking comprehension, new vocabulary, or grammatical concepts. The teacher tells learners to first think silently for a few seconds, then they discuss answers in pairs. Then the teacher selects a learner to share their answer with the whole class. This strategy allows more ‘wait time’, letting learners think and then compare their ideas before responding. It can motivate weaker learners to answer, increase the likelihood of successful answers, and if learners are encouraged to discuss in English, it can also afford useful speaking practice.

Back translation – Back translation has four stages. First, learners study the features of a model text in English. The text can be as short or as long as the teacher likes. Then, the learners translate it into their mother tongue. Afterward, the original English text is hidden, and learners must translate their mother tongue text back to English. Finally, they compare this text with the original English text and can note differences, self- or peer-correct errors, and even award marks if criteria are simple and clear.

Pair or small group activities – These activities increase learner involvement and allow for more learners to speak in English than would be possible with the whole class. Learners can also provide feedback to each other. Group work can be done in same ability groups or mixed ability groups where stronger students can provide guidance to other students.

Activity-based learning – Within activity-based learning, each learner progresses at their own speed through units of a syllabus, completing specific activities and then a self-assessment task (supported by the teacher) at the end of each unit. The teacher may spend time each lesson working with individual learners or working with small groups while others are busy working on activities. Whole-class teaching is possible, but not central to the approach. Activity-based learning has several advantages. It allows all learners in mixed-ability classes to study effectively and progress meaningfully. With training, learners can achieve impressive levels of autonomy, which reduces classroom management challenges for the teacher. They can work on skills, practice independently (especially reading and writing to improve literacy skills), and even self-assess their own work, reducing the burden that the teacher faces in marking learners’ work. The potential advantages are impressive, although activity-based learning does require more resources than are typical in large classes and becomes increasingly challenging as classes get bigger.

ANNEX 2: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHER CAPACITY AND COMPETENCES

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER STANDARDS

- I. Update teacher competences:
 - a. To match the new ELCF.
 - b. To ensure teachers have the skills to work in the post-COVID environment, specifically the ability to use:
 - i. Assessment for learning.
 - ii. Differentiated instruction.
 - iii. Blended learning.
2. Add clear linguistic standards for teachers, corresponding to the grades they teach and based on international best practices and the updated ELCF. The suggested levels are as follows:

| Grade | Student language level (new ELCF) | Minimum EFL teacher language level | Desired EFL teacher language level | Teacher career stages according to Foreign Language Teacher Standards |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Grade 1-3 | A1 | B1 | B2 | Beginner Teacher |
| Grade 4-6 | A2 | B1 | B2 | Proficient |
| Grade 7-10 | B1 | B2 | C1 | Highly Accomplished |
| Grade 11 and 12 | B2 | C1 | C2 | Lead Teachers |

3. Include the ability to teach large classes, specifically:
 - a. Tailoring pedagogy for large classes.
 - b. Managing large classes.
 - c. Teaching students of varying abilities and motivation in large classes.
 - d. Assessing students in large classes.
 - e. Working with materials adapted to large classes.
 - f. Teaching students by dividing them into smaller groups.

PRESERVICE EDUCATION FOR EFL TEACHERS

1. Include language requirements in the BA English and teacher training programs so that new teachers have the required language skills before teaching.
2. Include a strong focus on post-COVID classroom realities, specifically:
 - a. Blended learning.
 - b. Assessment for learning.

- c. Remediation.
- 3. Teach the competences listed in the updated Foreign Language Teacher Standards by including strong pedagogic module(s).
- 4. Develop a strategy, so all new teachers have basic skills and competences of to start teaching in the classroom.
- 5. Coordinate with the MoE and MoHE to incorporate updated EFL teacher standards into university training programs.
- 6. Include the following topics in teacher training programs:
 - a. Tailoring pedagogy for large classes.
 - b. Managing large classes.
 - c. Teaching students of varying abilities and motivation in large classes.
 - d. Assessing students in large classes.
 - e. Working with materials adapted to large classes.
 - f. Teaching students by dividing them into smaller groups.

INSERVICE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Include language requirements in the BA English and teacher training programs so that new teachers have the required language skills before teaching.
- 2. Ensure in-service programs for EFL teachers match the competences listed in the updated Foreign Language Teacher Standards.
- 3. Develop a learning track for teachers already employed to update their English language skills. Indicate a deadline by which teachers must update their language skills.
- 4. Develop a learning track for teachers to develop their language skills as their progress along their career path from beginner, proficient, highly accomplished, and lead teacher.

COACHING AND MENTORING

- 1. Decrease the supervisor-to-teacher ratio significantly.
- 2. Train supervisors to conduct evidence-based coaching.
- 3. Build on coaching models developed and piloted by RAMP and EDT.
- 4. Consider group-based coaching and peer coaching.
- 5. Use coaching and mentoring to increase the pedagogical capacities and linguistic skills of teachers for different stages of education.
- 6. Update the standard documents supervisors use to ensure they align with the updated ELCF and the National Teacher Standards.
- 7. Update the standard supervisor job description to encompass a coaching model.

TEACHER PLACEMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Update the CSB language assessment to ensure new teachers from KG to Grade 3 have a minimum of B1 (CEFR) across all six language skills, particularly in the productive skills.

2. Add a CEFR assessment to assess the language skills of current teachers:
 - a. Initially, use CEFR to determine teachers' level and get on-the-job support to improve their language skills.
 - b. Later, use CEFR to ensure teachers have the required linguistic skills to teach English.

ANNEX 3: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRICULUM AND TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS (TLM)

UPDATE THE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CURRICULUM

1. Provide examples of the following for each of the six EFL skills and different classroom settings in Jordan:
 - a. Formative assessment and remediation.
 - b. Blended learning.
 - c. Differentiate learning.
2. Update the English Language Curriculum Framework (ELCF) to specify the language level students work toward in each grade:

| Grade | Student language level according to new ELCF |
|------------------|--|
| Grades 1–3 | Level A1 |
| Grades 4–6 | Level A2 |
| Grades 7–10 | Level B1 |
| Grades 11 and 12 | Level B2 |

3. Update the ELCF to ensure that assessments encourage beneficial washback on teaching and learning.
4. Update the ELCF to accommodate the post-COVID learning situation with a focus on:
 - a. Formative assessment and remediation.
 - b. Blended learning.
 - c. Differentiated learning.
5. Ensure the ELCF provides sufficient guidance and space for addressing learning gaps.

UPDATE THE TLM SELECTION CRITERIA

1. The TLM should be suitable for large classes, with:
 - a. Activities and exercises, accompanied by easy instructions, that allow students to work in small groups without the teacher's help.
 - b. A list of strategies for teachers on teaching EFL to large classes.
 - c. Specific tips in the teacher guide on how to do the lesson or activity in a large class and/or with students of different levels.
 - d. Clear instructions for students on how to do an activity.
 - e. Materials catering to different learning styles and levels (differentiated learning).
 - f. Materials on teaching students to give feedback and peer assessment.
 - g. Materials (e.g., flashcards) that are big enough to be seen by all students.

- h. Additional materials for use in classes with a high teacher-student ratio.
2. The TLM should be suitable for different student ages from KG to Grade 4:
 - a. Do not contain abstract content in books.
 - b. Focus on learning through play and games.
 - c. Focus on building oral skills supported by literacy skills.
 - d. Provide assessments appropriate to the cognitive development stage of the students, particularly their attention spans and working memory capacities.
 - e. Takes into account that young students are still developing their language skills in their first language.
 3. The TLM should support learning recovery strategies:
 - a. Add specific competences for extensive reading skills:
 - i. Include specific learning statements for extensive reading.
 - ii. Provide guidance on assessing extensive reading skills.
 - iii. Review and – as needed - expand extensive reading program pilots that provide leveled readers to students, focusing on schools that need the most support and accompanying these programs with additional classroom libraries.
 - iv. Share online leveled reading books with students and parents so those with internet access can download and read them.
 - v. Use radio, TV, and social media to promote leveled readers and other remedial materials.
 - b. Use the remedial strategies developed by the MoE for Arabic and math for English language. This could include:
 - i. Prioritizing the curriculum.
 - ii. Identifying pre-requisite competencies and pre-requisite vocabulary for each grade (semester).
 - iii. Developing remedial materials like those developed for Arabic and math.
 - c. Ensure English language input and practice for *all* students (hearing and using the language- exposure to the language).
 4. The TLM should furthermore:
 - a. Be interesting and relevant to the students in Jordan, aiming to engage even students with low motivation to learn.
 - b. Adhere to common Jordan context concerning gender, culture, religion, etc.
 - c. Ensure gender balance, quality, and equity.
 - d. Help students to develop all six language skills equally at each desired level.
 - e. Cater for practicing different skills in different contexts of EFL in Jordan (rural/urban settings, high resource and low resource settings, offline and online schools).
 - f. Match the ELCF language levels, indicating the level of each exercise.
 - g. Accommodate differentiated learning.

- h. Cater for blended learning, whether at home or in class, in a city or rural location, online or paper-based lessons.
- i. Provide guidance for supplementary materials for teachers, parents, and students.
- j. Seek to enhance learning between Arabic and English languages.
- k. Be usable in different contexts, including:
 - i. Low- and high-resource classes and students.
 - ii. Larger and smaller teacher-student ratios.
 - iii. With students who miss the relevance of learning the English language.
- l. Consider the cognitive development of younger students.

MULTICOMPETENCE ARABIC AND ENGLISH

- 1. Focus on opportunities for transfer between Arabic and English by including:
 - a. Conceptual elements.
 - b. Metacognitive and metalinguistic strategies.
 - c. Pragmatic aspects of language use.
 - d. Specific linguistic elements.
 - e. Phonological awareness.
- 2. Enhance teachers' awareness and understanding of the interaction between primary and secondary languages.
- 3. Develop language skills across the curriculum for teachers and students.
- 4. Ensure students develop excellent literacy skills in the first language to enhance transfer to English.
- 5. Accommodate multicompetence and interlinkage between languages in the National Arabic Literacy Strategy.

ANNEX 4: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSESSMENTS

ENCOURAGE POSITIVE WASHBACK PRACTICES

1. Develop the assessment strategy to encourage positive washback on classroom practice for each of the six language skills.
2. Conduct research to better understand the Jordanian context around damaging washback from assessments onto student development of language skills.
3. Address (potential) weaknesses in teachers' skills.

LINK ASSESSMENTS TO THE CEFR

1. Link English Language Teaching and Assessment to the CEFR proficiency levels.

REVIEW THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

1. Design English tests to:
 - a. Focus on long-term teaching goals.
 - b. Cover a wide and unpredictable sample of skills.
 - c. Take into consideration the age of students.
 - d. Covers all six language skills.

ASSESS TEACHER LANGUAGE AND PEDAGOGIC SKILLS

1. Update assessments of language and pedagogic skills used:
 - a. By the CSB to assess at least B1 level of CERF for beginning teachers starting in KG to Grade 3.
 - b. In BA English language programs.
 - c. In supervision and in-service training and coaching.