

Arabterm: A technical dictionary for the Arab world



Background

Access to global knowledge is a key factor in sustainable development. However, the youth in the Arab world face huge obstacles to gaining this knowledge. They are isolated by the language barrier with the industrialized nations of the North that generate the majority of technical innovations.

The 2003 Arab Human Development Report has shown that the transfer of know-how cannot take place when students, researchers, and professors do not possess the necessary knowledge in terms of terminology in their mother language.

To this adds the fact that most of the advancements made in the field of technical dictionaries are not available online and are often obsolete. The aim of our partnership is to contribute to the development of the Arab language from a scientific point of view by improving the scientific Digital Arabic Content (DAC).

Facts and Figures: (Since 2011 to mid-2014)

- ARABTERM website users: 50 000
- Contacts in ARABTERM data base: 4 000
- Translated technical terminology into four languages (Arabic, English, French, German): app. 23.000
- Translated volumes : 6 (Automotive engineering volume, Water technology volume, Renewable energies volume, Electrical engineering volume, Transport and infrastructure volume, Textile industries volume)
- Projects partners : The Arabization Coordination Bureau (BCA), German Jordanian University (GJU), The Egyptian-German Cultural Center (ADK), Euro-Mediterranean Association for Cooperation and Development (EMA), Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion (OFPPT), The Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE), the German Institute for Standardization (DIN), Arabic Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), Goethe-Institute (GI).

At many universities in the Middle East and North Africa the teaching materials for technical subjects such as science and engineering are often only available in English or French. Students work from texts written in these languages while classes are conducted in Arabic. This makes it much more difficult to train future specialists in these areas.

In this context, significant efforts are being made to translate course material, curricula, rules and regulations and other resources into Arabic. However, given the many dialects spoken in the region, there is often no standard term for technological innovations.

Improving access to global knowledge

On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ is supporting efforts to standardize technical Arabic. In conjunction with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), we are developing an online technical dictionary in four languages, which students, trainees, translators and engineers can access free of charge. By mid-2014, the following volumes will be accomplished and published online: Automotive engineering, Water technology, Renewable energies, Electrical engineering, Transport and infrastructure and Textile industries.



The six-volume technical dictionary is available to all users at no cost

In addition to glossaries in German, English and French, a translation in Modern Standard Arabic is provided along with a short definition and illustration of the term.

Through the wiki function in the website, examples are given of terms that are used in various Arab countries.

The project is also establishing an experts' observatory for each discipline where experts can negotiate at regular intervals contributions and data processing within the network of ALECSO.



Definition and illustration of the word "Ball-and-nut-type power steering gear" on the ARABTERM website www.arabterm.org

Contribution to improved Arab-European understanding

There is currently no Arabic quadrilingual technical dictionary. As a response, ARABTERM came to bridge this gap.

Thanks to the technical dictionary, positive changes have been achieved through the:

- Creation of a technical translator's network;

- Transfer of knowledge in the technical field through a new tool available on the Internet for better accessibility;
- Creation of an exchange platform between communication partners for dissemination at the regional level;
- Conversion of BCA's traditional library to a digital library;
- Support of staff's Human Development Skills for the main partner;
- Enhancement of ARABTERM repute through active participation of the project in events of strategic importance (the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, ISESCO, AIDMO).

Testimonials

«The interactive technical lexicon is a masterpiece, which facilitates information search for users in a modern way, thus coping with the requirements of the era, in which cognitive science is a rapidly growing field. It provides information in four languages, which allows backup of information via informatics technology tools. We eagerly look forward to your next achievements».

His Excellency Dr. Abdul Aziz Hassan al-Tamimi, director of the Supreme Education Council (SEC) International Educational Affairs Office and secretary general of Qatar's National Commission for Education, Culture and Science.

«We always need absolute accuracy in linguistics, especially in the fields of international trade, production of high-tech machines, building bridges, scientific discussions with colleagues or patent applications».

His Excellency Mr. Thomas Fitschen, German Ambassador to the UN Geneva, on ARABTERM during the annual substantive session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). July, 2013

Main executive body	The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO)
Funding partners	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Partners	The Arabization Coordination Bureau (BCA), German Jordanian University (GJU), The Egyptian-German Cultural Centre (ÄDK), Euro-Mediterranean Association for Cooperation and Development (EMA), Office of Vocational Training and Employment Promotion (OFPPPT), The Regional Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE), the German Institute for Standardization (DIN), Arabic Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO), Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA), Goethe-Institute (GI), Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)
Priority areas	Arab countries
Duration of the project	2008-2014

The GIZ

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The GIZ is present in Morocco since 1975.

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