

TESOL

a guide

JUN LIU & CYNTHIA M. BERGER

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TESOL: A Guide

**JUN LIU
AND CYNTHIA M. BERGER**



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graduate assistants at University of Arizona, Karen Barto and Autumn Witt, for their help with early versions of the glossary of TESOL-related terms. Cynthia wishes to acknowledge the faculty and staff at Georgia State University's Department of Applied Linguistics & ESL for their indirect contribution to this book, as well as the faculty and employees at Nashville State Community College and the Tennessee Foreign Language Institute.

Last, but not least, we thank Bloomsbury Publishing for allowing us the time and flexibility to shape this book into its final version. Since TESOL is an ever growing field, an expanding global association, and a profession with increasing visibility and respect, we feel the information we provide and the issues we discuss here are ultimately as dynamic as TESOL itself. Still, we offer *TESOL: A Guide* as a snapshot of a field in motion, and we promise to begin our notes for a future edition as soon as this one is published.

Foreword

David Nunan Ph.D.

President Emeritus, Anaheim University California

Professor Emeritus, University of Hong Kong

Some years ago, as a Past President of TESOL Inc. (now TESOL International Association), I received an invitation from the editors of the present volume to write a chapter for a proposed volume on TESOL. This proposed book had a laudable aim. As TESOL the Association approached its 50th anniversary, the book would capture the reflections, memories, and experiences of those of us who had led the Association before we all went gaga. I thought the idea was entirely praiseworthy and rushed into print, assembling my memories before I went gaga myself, something which my daughters had been telling me for some time was imminent. For one reason or another, the book never made it past the enthusiasm stage. It may have been that by that stage, too many of my fellow Past Presidents had already entered Gagaland. (Something I doubt. I know most of them, and as they age they are as mentally acute as they have ever been. Eccentric as they have ever been of course, but definitely not gaga.)

Then, several months prior to the 2010 TESOL convention in Boston, Kathleen M. Bailey, who had preceded me as President, Andy Curtis, who would become a future president (and, in fact, is President as I write this piece), and I were asked to give a plenary on the history of the Association. We had fun and frustration in equal measure putting together this plenary, harassing Central office for photographs and archival information. We presented a decade-by-decade snapshot of the evolution of TESOL as a profession and as an association. For each decade, we took a tripartite approach, looking first at what major events were shaping the world at large, then at what trends were preoccupying the profession, and finally at how events in the world at large and in the field of TESOL in general were shaping the association. Sadly, the video version of our plenary never made it out of the convention. That was a pity. We dug up a lot of archival footage for that plenary. According to feedback, it wasn't a bad plenary as plenaries go, and as plenaries go, it went.

I was therefore more than delighted to receive an invitation to contribute a foreword to this collection, which has, it seems, been inspired in part by the desire to do what the Past Presidential volume never achieved – mainly because it never got published. One of the good things about TESOL the

acronym is its chameleon-like character. Eavesdrop on any conversation in which the acronym is used and you have to figure out first of all in what sense the term is being used: to refer to the profession, to the association, or the field of study? Or are the interlocutors referring to all three? More likely than not, the answer is the latter.

TESOL: A Guide is aptly named. It offers the neophyte (and I'm sure many post-neophytes) the three dimensions of TESOL covered by the term. The reader is provided with a basic overview of the profession, the association, and the field of study. It is particularly useful as an overview of the Association, and of the role that the Association has played, through its various activities: its publications, most notably *TESOL Quarterly*; its Annual Convention; its outreach to the profession through professional development activities, actual and virtual, around the world; its work in developing and promoting professional standards of practice; its political advocacy to protect and preserve the interests of the constituencies it represents; its work in developing professional standards of practice; and its promotion of an active research agenda. All of these aspects and more are captured within these pages.

One thing that makes this volume special is the fact that it is co-authored by two TESOL members who represent different generations of the profession and the association. Past-President Jun Liu brings institutional memory and the unique perspective of being the first Asian president of the association. Cynthia Berger brings the freshness and energy of the new generation.

This book needs to find a place on the bookshelf, or on the desktop, of every practicing TESOL teacher and of those teachers who are currently contemplating entering the field.

Preface

Introduction

This book project, *TESOL: A Guide*, has gone through several phases in its formation. It started as a book of reflection from past presidents of TESOL to reflect on their own TESOL experiences as they embarked on the journey of TESOL Association leadership. It then went through a phase of audience reconsideration – would the book be for future leaders in TESOL or for its membership? If the latter, what benefits might TESOL members get from such a book? It took a few more rounds of hesitancy before the framework of the current book came into being. Eventually, what began as a research project about the nature of TESOL merged with the past presidents' reflections and grew into the book before you: a three-dimensional introduction to TESOL as a field of study, as a profession, and as an association. It is our hope that our dual perspectives as a professor and as a graduate student resonate with the purpose of the book – to bring to aspiring TESOL professionals, or TESOLers, particularly the novice, a guide full of resources, information, strategies, and suggestions for an exciting and rewarding career in TESOL.

Introductions

In the section below, we take a moment to introduce ourselves and then to speak in our own respective voices about our unique experience with TESOL and how it has shaped our journey towards writing *TESOL: A Guide*.

Jun Liu, the first author of this book, also a long-term TESOL member and leader, has been inspired by the transformation of many TESOLers like himself who went from being a learner of English as a Foreign Language to a Professor of English in a major research university in the United States. In other words, he has gone from enjoying the benefits of TESOL to contributing to TESOL himself.

Cynthia Berger, the second author of the book, a novice TESOL member and a PhD student in Applied Linguistics and ESL, still remembers how her own initial untrained teaching experience as a native English speaker

prompted her to seek out theories, research studies, and principles-based practices in TESOL.

Part I: Stories from Cynthia

My first experience with TESOL was as a young college student studying abroad several years ago. As I left my apartment building in southern Spain one morning, I was approached by two men in business suits who explained that they worked in an office nearby. They'd noticed me speaking English with my Swiss roommate and asked if I would be interested in providing them with English lessons once a week. I was thrilled at the idea of having a few extra euros per month and enthusiastically agreed. The naivety with which I entered into this initial teaching arrangement parallels the way many first-time, untrained English language teachers enter the classroom: I didn't know the learners' background (though I'm glad to report that they did not turn out to be kidnappers); I didn't know how or where they used English in their everyday lives; I had no intention of assessing the students' current competence in English; nor did I stop to consider their specific objectives for learning English in the first place. I did assume, however, as many still do, that speaking English fluently was the only prerequisite to teaching it (a notion that still makes me cringe today). Anytime I stop to reflect on this experience as a novice English teacher, I realize how far I've come. After working on this book, I realize how far I have to go.

By the time I entered the graduate programme in the Department of Applied Linguistics and ESL at Georgia State University, I was passionate about teaching English and had accumulated a considerable amount of teaching experience in a variety of contexts. Still, I had no background in research, knew little about the most pressing issues and controversies in the field, cared little about the professional dimension of TESOL, and certainly had never considered investing my hard-earned money on conference attendance or for membership in a professional association. Furthermore, after my first week of course reading, I was utterly overwhelmed by the plethora of terminology, acronyms, and concepts referred to in TESOL literature, no doubt written by scholars who assumed that readers would share their knowledge base. In other words, I was still a novice.

Two years later, when I was considering whether or not to pursue a PhD in the field, I found myself in novice territory once again, as I attempted to navigate the PhD application process, to understand the variety of research specializations within the field, and to grasp the nature of the TESOL profession as a whole. Which research agenda interested me the most?

Where would I best fit in the field professionally? What role might a professional association play in helping me to develop individually while gaining access to resources, cutting-edge research, and networks within the TESOL community at large?

In a way, this book is written for all of my past selves: newcomers, essentially, either to TESOL as a whole, or to a particular aspect of TESOL as a body of research, a profession, or an association. I should also acknowledge that writing this book has been valuable to my present self, a PhD student seeking to gain a better understanding of the sheer breadth of TESOL at the same time that she refines her perspective towards key issues within TESOL and develops a clear sense of the history of TESOL International Association and the role it has played and continues to play in the growth of the field.

In this regard, it is my hope that *TESOL: A Guide* will serve as a valuable resource to 'newcomers' at all stage of experience, from novice teachers to incoming graduate students, to seasoned practitioners and researchers in the field. One thing I've realized about the TESOL profession is that it is constantly changing, an ongoing process of development that demands continual adaptation and learning. In other words, I have grown accustomed to the feeling of being a novice, both as a researcher and within my teaching practice, and I hope that you, too, will experience the enthusiasm and curiosity of a newcomer as you explore this book.

Part II: Stories from Jun

It must have been around 2 a.m. on a crisp morning on 12 January 2005 in China when I received a call from Washington, DC. It was Chuck Amorosino, TESOL's Executive Director at the time:

'Jun, are you ready for the election results?' Chuck asked calmly.

'Yes, please,' I said, eagerly awaiting the answer. After a prolonged pause, which was almost torture, I heard,

'You won! You're the next President of TESOL. Congratulations!'

'What?' I uttered quietly, for fear of waking up my neighbours. 'You mean I was elected by TESOL members to be their president for the next three years?'

'Yes, Jun, now I hope you can get some sleep.' Did I sleep afterwards? No. Not that night for sure, nor for many nights after that until the very day when my presidential tenure ended in 2008.

My mind has always been full of TESOL-related issues and people. From being unable to comprehend *TESOL Quarterly* articles as a young college English teacher in China to becoming one of its contributors; from

self-learning TESOL methods and techniques to teaching such courses in graduate programmes in the US; from being an emerging NNEST caucus leader to serving on the TESOL Board of Directors as member at large; and from positioning myself in US academia to bouncing back to China and larger TESOL communities outside North America – I now realize how I have come such a long way over the last four decades from being a learner of English as a foreign language to a professor teaching English to American students.

After that phone call, I both day-dreamed and night-dreamed, but I knew for sure that it was real, and that I was ready to step up and serve the association we are all so passionate about. Among all of the responsibilities that I had as TESOL President, one thing for sure is that I travelled constantly to reach out to TESOL members around the world. From Dubai to Mexico, from Turkey to Greece, from the Philippines to Cambodia, from South Korea to China, from France to Thailand, I enjoyed meeting with current and future TESOLers around the world, speaking at affiliates' conferences, and in particular, I enjoyed bringing TESOL to these international communities. I walked the TESOL walk, danced the TESOL dance, and smelled like a TESOLer. But it was not until my keynote speech at the 27th ThaiTESOL Annual convention and the 6th Pan Asia Conference that I realized how well TESOL had finally been received by our international communities. As the first Asian TESOL President at their conference, I delivered my prepared speech 'Promising Asia and Unlimited Boundaries'. During the post-plenary interview, I was asked by a reporter from *Bangkok Post* how I felt being the first Asian President of TESOL. I replied with 4 Ss: *Special, Significant, Splendid, and Smooth*.

It was SPECIAL because having an Asian president is a symbol of the association reaching outside the US. TESOL's claim of being a global association is now validated by its leadership, its membership, as well as its partnership. With global outreach as one of the goals of TESOL's strategic plan, I feel TESOL has come a long way to reach this status. I am truly happy that TESOL is global, and that a few years after my presidency, the name TESOL Inc. has officially been changed to TESOL International Association.

It was SIGNIFICANT that wherever I went and whomever I met in different countries, I was seen as a role model for hundreds and thousands of non-native English teachers and learners. By listening to my speeches and stories, they found their own identities, their own shadows, and their own voices, which permeate their lives and workplaces. The fact of the matter is that more than 80 per cent of English language teachers are non-native speakers and it is significant that they understand that TESOL respects, values, and represents them.

It was SPLENDID in that TESOL had come a long way, through four decades of innovation, creativity, and reconfiguration, to reach the point where we were recognized by English language teachers for the professional

resources we provide; we were and continue to be consulted by governments and agencies for expert opinions regarding language policy, standards, curriculum, teaching and testing; we have had contracts with publishers such as Thomson Learning, McGraw-Hill, and Harcourt Assessment to launch joint products for the profession, and we have partnered with sister associations to discuss joint projects.

It was SMOOTH in that, however complicated and complex matters were, the TESOL Board of Directors always worked with TESOL Central Office staff collaboratively and collegially. TESOL members were always consulted, and voices from different entities and constituents were always heard loud and clear.

In a word, TESOL has spanned the globe through tides of change over decades, for the better. For years, I have had the desire to write a book dedicated to TESOL not only as a field of study and a profession, but as an international association and a global community of English language teaching professionals. I have sought to inspire and inform younger TESOL generations to better understand where TESOL comes from, who its members are, what they do, and how they develop their TESOL professional identity over decades.

To me, *TESOL: A Guide* is a book I needed when I first began teaching English in China more than three decades ago, when I studied in the Second and Foreign Language PhD programme at The Ohio State University more than two decades ago, and when I started teaching and advising graduate students in the English Language/Linguistics (ELL) and Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT) Interdisciplinary PhD programme more than 16 years ago.

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