

Book Review

TESOL: A Guide

By Jun Liu & Cynthia M. Berger

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As Past TESOL President, Dr David Nunan, points out in his Foreward of *TESOL: A Guide*, this volume is aptly named. This book serves as a comprehensive reference resource for current and prospective English language teachers, students of TESOL, academics, and other professionals working within the field of Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL). One thing that makes this volume unique is that it was written by two TESOL members who represent different generations and demographics of the profession and of the association. Past President Jun Liu brings with him both the historical knowledge of the association and the distinct perspective of serving as the first Asian President of the association. Graduate student in TESOL, Cynthia Berger, brings with her the freshness and energy of someone new to the profession.

TESOL: A Guide explores TESOL in three dimensions: as a profession, as a field of study, and as an international association. Its major purpose was to bring

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. The clever stories written by Jun and Cynthia in the volume preface engage the reader and provide an excellent rationale to why this volume was written and why it is important.

As previously stated, the volume looks at the three dimensions of TESOL: TESOL as a profession, TESOL as a field of study and TESOL as an international association. The final section of the volume provides a useful list of TESOL resources. Let's examine each of these sections in more depth.

According to the authors, when we use the phrase *TESOL as a profession*, we refer to the community of skilled practitioners who are actively involved in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. Not surprisingly, English teachers comprise the largest proportion of *TESOL professionals*. However, it is also noted that a *TESOL professional* may also be a curriculum designer, a tester, a researcher and a teacher trainer, among others. Another important point made in this section of the volume is the focus on the term 'skilled' to describe a TESOL professional. Although this is not often the reality in countries where English is not the predominant language, it is aspirational on the part of the authors and a goal for the profession to strive for.

Chapter 2 begins with a disclaimer of the complexity of TESOL professionals to shape their own identities and explore their perceptions of what it means to be a

professional in the field of TESOL. Therefore, the authors argue that the notion of being a TESOL professional is a 'shifting construct' (Lorimer & Shulte, 2011, p. 34) and one that is continually defined and redefined by all members of the field (p. 34). Other important content in this chapter includes a useful discussion on what qualifications are needed to be a TESOL professional including information on certifications, endorsements and graduate MA and PhD programs in TESOL. The rest of this chapter includes information on Standards with a special focus on the TESOL Standards. Professional development and career advancement round out this section of the volume. This section is in my view one of the most valuable for teachers of all levels as it includes a basic description of professional development and then moves on to advocate various elements of PD like reflective teaching, peer and self-observation, teaching journals, team teaching, communities of practice and the acquisition of new knowledge through conferences, academic journals/publications and professional citizenship.

Chapter 3 of this volume continues to examine *TESOL as a field of study*. This is very succinctly accomplished by exploring the diversity of research in TESOL including the methodological frameworks, types of research and the issues that surround research in our field. Author Jun Liu offers three of his own case studies designed to illustrate why he considers action research to be the most efficient methodology. Another very helpful part of this volume is the annotated selection of ten key issues in TESOL research. This section is extremely useful even for those

practitioners who don't identify as researchers as it offers a thorough summary of themes and issues relevant to TESOL's multiple dimensions, including a practical overview of the TESOL profession and a compendium of current TESOL research topics and methodologies.

Chapter 4 explores the dimension of *TESOL as a Professional Association* and begins with a wonderful interview between one of the authors, Jun Liu and the 'Father of TESOL' James Alatis who provides an insider perspective of the association since its founding in 1966. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of TESOL International Association, this chapter highlights the development of this association and features the reflections of several previous TESOL International Association presidents on the topic of what makes the TESOL International Association so special, what issues matter today and what the future will hold for TESOL and its members. The remainder of this chapter is a virtual treasure trove of information about TESOL and something I wished I had had access to prior to my terms of Convention Chair (2006) and President (2011-2012). The authors provide us with a very comprehensive description of TESOL including demographics of its members, its governance structure and the many entities that exist under the umbrella of the association (i.e., affiliates, standing committees, interest sections) as well as the current state of its advocacy efforts. Information about the many events (i.e., the annual convention, TESOL Symposia, TESOL Academies) that TESOL offers to its members worldwide is also shared in this chapter.

Chapter 5 begins with a list of TESOL acronyms and initialisms that are typically found in TESOL-related discourse and publications and proceeds on to an annotated list of TESOL-related professional associations like IATEFL, TIRF, Asia TEFL, AILA among others. Chapter 5 concludes with brief yet thorough explanations of TESOL-related terminology accompanied by key readings designed to serve as a reference for both novice and experienced TESOL practitioners alike.

The TESOL International Association is dynamic and even though this book is fairly recent (2015) as publications go, there have been changes to the association since its publication. For example, Standing Committees are now known as Professional Councils etc. Despite these minor changes, this volume is a critical addition to any TESOLer's professional library. To have all this information on the three dimensions of TESOL at your fingertips in one volume is a true gift.

References

Lorimer, C. & Schulte, J. (2011). Reimagining TESOL professionalism: The graduate student perspective. *CATESOL Journal*, 23(1), 31-44.