

ABWE English Language Ministries  
ESL/EFL Teaching Competencies Guidelines  
May 2023

**Introduction: Central Ministry Focus for English Language Ministries**

Equipping English teachers in ministry with resources and professional development opportunities resulting in excellence in teaching and in culturally appropriate outreach.

**Philosophy of Ministry**

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is a God-given opportunity to show Christ and to make Him known in countries around the world and in North America. We believe that to gain the respect of students and to earn the right to be heard concerning the Gospel, we must display excellence in teaching English. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus ...” Colossians 3:17.

Our philosophy of ministry is further elaborated in the book *An ESL Ministry Handbook: Contexts and Principles* (Credo House Publications) by Michael Pasquale. In it the principles of English language ministry and the principles of learning and teaching are given. The principles of English language ministry are 1) Be ethical, 2) Be hospitable, and 3) Be in prayer.

- Those involved in English language ministry must be ethical, i.e., we must do what we say we are doing. We must avoid a “bait-and-switch” mentality in which we advertise English classes without delivering what we promise. We must be excellent English teachers.
- Those in English language ministry must also practice hospitality. Love must be evident in all we do. Classes should involve relationship-building and involve personal ministry.
- We also need to be in prayer. Prayer must be given for our students and for our teachers. Prayer must be an integral part of our churches and our English language ministries.

The principles of language learning and teaching can be remembered as “Be prepared to teach the ABCs.” We as teachers must be prepared to teach. We must understand what our students’ attitudes, needs and motivations are for learning English. We must stress that students need to be diligent in their work and encourage them to communicate in English as much as possible.

These principles, as spelled out in *An ESL Ministry Handbook*, are applicable to all English teaching contexts – formal classroom settings in schools or churches, one-on-one tutoring situations, and short-term English language outreach.

## Helpful Definitions

- *English as a Second Language* (ESL): teaching English in a context where English is the main language spoken (e.g., teaching English in the US and Canada).
- *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL): teaching English in a context where English is not the main language spoken (e.g., teaching English in China).
- *Teaching English as a Second Language* (TESL): training teachers to teach English in an ESL setting.
- *Teaching English as a Foreign Language* (TEFL): training teachers to teach English in an EFL setting.
- *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL): a cover term that includes both TESL and TEFL and is also the name of the professional organization for TESOL teachers.
- *English Language Learner* (ELL): a student of English as a second or foreign language. This is a general term that includes both ESL and EFL learners.
- *English Language Teaching* (ELT): the teaching of English to people whose first language is not English.
- *First Language* (L1): a speaker's first language (or "mother tongue")
- *Second Language* (L2): a second language, a foreign language, or a target language.

## A Rationale for ESL/EFL Teaching Competencies

English language ministries are one of the most popular tools used by churches and missionaries today for outreach to the community. However, ministry-based English language outreach has recently come under increased scrutiny from both inside and outside the Christian community due to lack of professionalism. Often teachers in ministry settings lack training. This is a grave concern to the Christian community because it affects our witness and credibility. Those outside our community charge us with a lack of ethics and integrity. Are we teaching English, or are we using it as bait for gaining new converts? The goal of a Christian English teacher should be to be an excellent English teacher. **If we value excellence in English language teaching, we must value training for English language teachers.**

We will follow the program standards as prepared by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) and the international TESOL organization.

## Six Content Standards:

1. Language Proficiency: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational
2. Cultures, Linguistics, Literatures and Concepts from Other Disciplines
3. Language Acquisition Theories and Knowledge of Students and Their Needs
4. Integration of Standards in Planning, Classroom Practice, and Use of Instructional Resources
5. Assessment of Languages and Cultures – Impact on Student Learning
6. Professional Development, Advocacy, and Ethics

(ACTFL 2013, TESOL 2010) See Appendix A for more detail on the six content standards.

### **Levels of Preparation**

Level 1: Introductory Course (fewer than 20 hours)

Level 2: Short Certificate in TESOL (20-100 hours)

Level 3: Average Certificate in TESOL (100 hours or more)

Level 4: Undergraduate program with TESOL emphasis (minor or major) or graduate certificate/diploma program in TESOL

Level 5: Master's program with TESOL emphasis (M.A. or M.Ed.)

All missionaries ([long-term, mid-term, associate, short-term, intern, missions trips](#)) should have training appropriate to ministry assignment. The English Ministries Team is available to help English teachers succeed in English language teaching. We highly recommend training as a professional development step to increase effectiveness. *Appendix B: ABWE ELT Levels of Preparation Chart* on pages 10 and 11 summarizes the training recommendations listed below.

- All missions trip team members are strongly encouraged to have Level 1 training.
- All interns and short-term missionaries who will serve for up to six months are strongly encouraged to have Level 1 training.
- All interns and short-term missionaries who will serve for more than six months are strongly encouraged to have Level 2 training if they participate in ELT.
- All associate and mid-term missionaries are strongly encouraged to have Level 2 training if they participate in ELT. Level 3 training is a highly recommended professional development step for those involved in English language ministries (teaching, class preparation, grading, etc.) 20 hours or more a week.
- All long-term missionaries involved in ELT are strongly encouraged to have at least Level 2 training. Level 3 training is a highly recommended professional development step for those involved in English language ministries (teaching, class preparation, grading, etc.) 20 hours or more a week. For those who are primarily involved in ELT then Level 4 is recommended. Those missionaries involved in a formal school teaching environment will need at least Level 4 training to be able to

teach in most international schools. Level 5 training will open many doors of opportunities.

### Level 1:

- In general, the Level 1 requirement can be met through a training seminar or class that covers the following key areas:
  - **Basic Linguistics:** nature of language, phonetics, grammar, etc.
  - **Language Acquisition:** how language is learned
  - **Pedagogy/Methods:** lesson planning, classroom management
  - **Culture:** interpersonal communication
- Some courses that can satisfy this requirement:
  - A course equivalent to Volunteer ESL Teacher Training from PCA MNA (Presbyterian Church of American Mission to North America): *Teaching English Language Learners the Good News*
- For more information on Level 1 Programs go to *Teacher Training Programs* at the ABWE English Language Ministries website.

### Level 2:

- In general, the Level 2 requirement can be met through a training program that covers the following key areas:
  - **Linguistics:** nature of language, phonetics, grammar, etc.
  - **Language Acquisition:** key models, relation to curriculum
  - **Pedagogy/Methods:** syllabus and lesson plan design; lesson planning in the following key areas: reading, writing, listening, speaking; basic assessment strategies
  - **Culture:** training in cross-cultural classroom maintenance; interpersonal communication
- Some programs that can satisfy this requirement:
  - A program equivalent to the Biola LEARN TESOL Certificate.
  - A program equivalent to the Reach Out With English (ROWE)
- For more information on Level 2 programs go to *Teacher Training Programs* at the ABWE English Language Ministries website.

### Level 3:

- In general, the Level 3 requirement can be met through a training program that covers some of the following key areas:
  - **Linguistics:** intermediate-advanced training in phonetics, morphology (word formation), syntax (arrangement of words within a sentence), and semantics (meaning of words)

- **Language Acquisition:** philosophy of language acquisition and relation to language teaching methods (historical and current)
- **Pedagogy / Methods:** Further training in lesson planning for listening, speaking, reading, and writing; curriculum development; advanced assessment strategies
- **Culture:** training in areas of sociolinguistics
- Primary focus is on applying the theoretical to the practical
- Can be met through taking a certificate program such as CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults).
- For more information on Level 3 programs go to *Teacher Training Programs* at the ABWE English Language Ministries website.

#### Level 4:

- Can be met through earning an undergraduate degree with either a TESOL major or minor.
  - Institutions offering this path include:
    - Cornerstone University
    - Columbia International University
- Can be met through completing a DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) course.
- Can be met through a graduate certificate/diploma in TESOL
  - Cornerstone University
- For more information on Level 4 programs go to *Teacher Training Programs* at the ABWE English Language Ministries website.

#### Level 5:

- Can be met through earning a graduate degree with a TESOL emphasis (MA TESOL, MA TESL or M.Ed. with a TESOL emphasis).
- Institutions offering this path:
  - Cornerstone University
  - Moody Graduate School
  - Messiah University
  - Columbia International University
  - Biola University
- For more information on Level 5 programs go to *Teacher Training Programs* at the ABWE English Language Ministries website.

## References

- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). *Program Standards for the Preparation of Foreign Language Teachers: Initial Level – Undergraduate and Graduate Programs*. 2013. Retrieved May 17, 2021 from [https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/caep/ACTFLCAEPStandards2013\\_v2015.pdf](https://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/caep/ACTFLCAEPStandards2013_v2015.pdf)
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- Doff, Adrian. *Teach English: A Training Course for Teachers*. Cambridge University Press. 1988.
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- Pasquale, Michael. 2011. *An ESL Ministry Handbook: Contexts and Principles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Credo House Publishers.
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## English Ministries Team

The English Ministries Team is available to assist missionaries, teachers and administrators. We want to connect teachers with the resources and the professional development opportunities that will equip them to teach English well. For more information contact us at [tesolconsultant@abwe.org](mailto:tesolconsultant@abwe.org).

## **Appendix A: Expanded Six Content Standards for Levels of Competence: Levels 1, 2 and 3**

### Level 1: Introductory Course

By completing Level 1 I can:

#### Standard 1: Language Proficiency of Instructor: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational

- Speak English fluently and accurately (interpersonal)
- Interpret oral messages, written messages and some literary selections (interpretive)
- Present information, concepts and ideas orally (presentational)

#### Standard 2: Cultures, Linguistics, Literatures and Concepts from Other Disciplines

- Identify five North American cultural values
- Identify two examples of the relationship between English and the North American culture
- Explain the cause of cultural misunderstanding—“Attributing meaning or motive to someone’s behavior based on your own cultural values and experience.” (Patty Lane, *A Beginner’s Guide to Crossing Cultures*)
- Identify two examples of nonverbal communication that can be misunderstood by people from another culture
- Identify the four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing
- Identify some of the components of language
  - Pronunciation
  - Vocabulary
  - Grammar

#### Standard 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Knowledge of Students and Their Needs

- Define common TESOL acronyms
- Identify two differences between learning a first language and learning a second language as an adult
- Identify two differences between learning to speak a language and learning to read and write it
- Conduct class sessions that will have students doing most of the speaking in the classroom

#### Standard 4: Integration of Standards in Planning, Classroom Practice, and Use of Instructional Resources

- Create a list of classroom rules
- Set a positive atmosphere by
  - Learning student names
  - Encouraging all students to participate
  - Encouraging students to do most of the speaking in class

- Select an appropriate textbook
- Create a lesson plan

#### Standard 5: Assessment of Languages and Cultures – Impact on Student Learning

- Administer a placement interview
- Assign students to an appropriate class level based on interview results

#### Standard 6: Professional Development, Advocacy, and Ethics

- Locate an experienced teacher who will provide assistance
- Identify two resources to answer questions about grammar

#### Level 2: Short Certificate

By completing Level 2 I can:

#### Standard 1: Language Proficiency: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational

- Speak English fluently and accurately (interpersonal)
- Interpret oral messages, written messages and some literary selections (interpretive)
- Present information, concepts and ideas orally (presentational)

#### Standard 2: Cultures, Linguistics, Literatures and Concepts from Other Disciplines

- Identify my classroom expectations in terms of my culture
- Identify classroom expectations of learners
- Evaluate English stories and select those that are culturally appropriate for my students
- Describe the sound system of English
  - Word stress and syllables
  - Sentence stress and rhythm
  - Sounds of English consonants and vowels
- Student pronunciation
  - Identify the difficulty in producing comprehensible speech
  - Develop a plan to provide information and feedback on what to do differently
- Describe how words are formed from their parts
- Grammar: the basic forms and functions of English grammatical structures
  - List three things to emphasize when teaching grammar:
    - Form
    - Meaning
    - Use
  - List five basic sentence patterns
  - Nouns
    - List ways to form plural nouns



- Distinguish between countable and noncountable nouns
- Articles
  - List the kinds of articles
  - Describe their occurrence
  - Identify the information they provide
  - Identify pronunciation
- Comparative Adjectives
  - Describe how to form them
  - Describe their use—to make comparisons
  - List the four sentence patterns using “than”
- Present Progressive
  - Describe its form, meaning and use
- Predicting the future
  - Identify when to use “will”
  - Identify when to use “be going to”

### Standard 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Knowledge of Students and Their Needs

- Describe the principles of language learning
- Apply those principles in the classroom
  - The purpose of language is communication
  - Students must acquire both knowledge of the language and skill in speaking
  - Students’ feelings impact language learning
  - Students vary in their preferred learning styles
- When presenting an activity, model it. Showing is better than telling.
- Use language teaching models such as TPR (Total Physical Response) and Grammar Chants, etc.

### Standard 4: Integration of Standards in Planning, Classroom Practice, and Use of Instructional Resources

- Construct an effective lesson plan
- Plan more activities than I think I will need
- Select activities that support the main teaching point
- Teach a simple lesson centered on reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking
- Effectively use tools in an ELL classroom such as a picture dictionary

### Standard 5: Assessment of Languages and Cultures – Impact on Student Learning

- Identify two purposes of classroom assessment
  - Diagnostic
  - Motivational
- Test skills you want the students to develop, even if it is not easy

- Use direct testing measures—require students to do what they would have to do in real life
- Set goals for students to meet
- Keep track of progress
- Adapt lessons based on assessment results

### Standard 6: Professional Development, Advocacy, and Ethics

- Make a plan to become a better teacher
  - Identify a helpful English teacher to follow online
  - Select a book to read
  - Identify a professional development training opportunity
  - Identify a professional organization to join
- Treat students with kindness and respect; you are an authority figure
- Keep your word to your students and the institution

### Level 3: Average Certificate

By completing Level 3 I can:

#### Standard 1: Language Proficiency: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational

- Describe the main ways varieties of English vary from each other
- Speak English fluently and accurately (interpersonal)
- Interpret oral messages, written messages and literary selections of various genres (interpretive)
- Present information, concepts and ideas orally (presentational)

#### Standard 2: Cultures, Linguistics, Literatures and Concepts from Other Disciplines

- Compare and contrast cultural practices and perspectives among cultures
- Identify language backgrounds of learners (multi/monolingual; standard/nonstandard)
- Assess how a learner’s language background might influence the learning of English
- Describe how and why language changes over time
- Compare and contrast the phonetic sounds of English with another language
- Describe the phonological structure of English in comparison to another language
- Explain grammar:
  - the rules and conventions relating to words, sentences, paragraphs and texts
  - how the verb phrase and noun phrase are formed and used in English
  - basic principles of word formation, word meaning and use
- Compare and contrast English discourse rules to that of another language

### Standard 3: Language Acquisition Theories and Knowledge of Students and Their Needs

- Describe language models for teaching and learning
- Apply this knowledge in planning and teaching
- List kinds of learning preferences
- Apply learning preferences to planning and teaching
- Create a supportive learning environment
- Adapt teaching to the needs of students

### Standard 4: Integration of Standards in Planning, Classroom Practice, and Use of Instructional Resources

- Work successfully with learners of different levels
- Involve learners of different ability levels in the work of the class
- Enable learners to feel a sense of progress
- Make appropriate use of a range of materials and resources in relation to specified aims
- Demonstrate creativity when teaching with limited resources

### Standard 5: Assessment of Languages and Cultures – Impact on Student Learning

- Describe language models for teaching and learning
- Apply this knowledge in planning and teaching
- Monitor learner behaviors in class and respond appropriately
- Incorporate some basic assessment procedures into the class
- Make planning and teaching decisions on the basis of assessment

### Standard 6: Professional Development, Advocacy, and Ethics

- Make a balanced and constructive self-appraisal of my teaching
- Respond appropriately to feedback from tutors, peers and learners
- Assess my strengths and development needs
- Apply that assessment to set goals and targets for future development

**Appendix B: ABWE ELT Levels of Preparation Chart**

Training Level	Ministry Assignment	Training Content
<p><b>Level 1:</b> Introductory Course (20 hours or fewer)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All missions trip team members</b> are strongly encouraged to have Level 1 training.</li> <li>• <b>All interns and short-term missionaries who will serve for <u>up to six months</u></b> are strongly encouraged to have Level 1 training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page 4 of this document</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 2:</b> Short Certificate in TESOL (20-100 hours)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All interns and short-term missionaries who will serve for <u>more than six months</u></b> are strongly encouraged to have training equivalent to Level 2 if they participate in ELT.</li> <li>• <b>All associate and mid-term missionaries</b> are strongly encouraged to have training equivalent to Level 2 if they participate in ELT.</li> <li>• <b>All long-term missionaries</b> involved in ELT are strongly encouraged to have at least Level 2 training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page 4 of this document</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 3:</b> Average Certificate Program (100 hours or more)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All associate and mid-term missionaries:</b> Level 3 training is highly recommended for those involved in English language ministries for <b><u>20 hours or more a week</u></b>.</li> <li>• <b>All long-term missionaries:</b> Level 3 training is a highly recommended professional development step for those involved in English language ministries for <b><u>20 hours or more a week</u></b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pages 4 and 5 of this document</li> </ul>

Training Level	Ministry Assignment	Training Content
<p><b>Level 4:</b> Undergraduate program with TESOL emphasis or graduate certificate/diploma program in TESOL</p>	<p>• <b>All long-term missionaries:</b> For those who are <b><u>primarily involved in ELT</u></b> then Level 4 or 5 is recommended. Those missionaries <b><u>involved in a formal school teaching environment</u></b> will need at least Level 4 training to teach in most international schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page 5 of this document</li> </ul>
<p><b>Level 5:</b> Master’s program with TESOL emphasis (M.A. or M.Ed.)</p>	<p>• <b>All long-term missionaries:</b> For those who are <b><u>primarily involved in ELT</u></b> Level 5 can open many doors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pages 5 and 6 of this document</li> </ul>