

# Chapter 1

## Setting the scene



In this chapter you can learn about:

- English Language Teaching and the kind of people the profession suits
- who this book is for
- why people take certificate courses
- the four aims of this book: to clarify the field of ELT/TESOL; to enable you to identify a good certificate course; to help you to succeed on your certificate course; and to help you to prepare for employment in ELT/TESOL
- the background of the author
- how to use this book.

### ▶ ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

**English Language Teaching** is a profession that is also known as **Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages** or **Teaching English as a Foreign Language**. All three labels are abbreviated, so you will come across **ELT**, **TESOL** and **TEFL**. The abbreviation ELT/TESOL is used throughout this book.

As a profession, ELT/TESOL offers a wide variety of interesting possibilities, including the opportunity to teach children or adults. This book is concerned in particular with English Language Teaching to adults.

A career in ELT/TESOL could suit you if:

- you like the thought of a job that involves working with language (though you do not need to speak English as a first language to become qualified to teach it; nor do you need to know a lot about English **grammar** before you begin)
- you would like a job that involves meeting and working with adults from other countries and cultures
- you like the idea of living and working in another country (though a career in ELT/TESOL does not necessarily mean you have to work abroad – you might well be able to stay in your home town).

If this description fits you, then you should read on. This book will tell you more about all of these aspects, and it will also tell you about how to become a qualified teacher in ELT/TESOL by taking one of the many certificate courses available.

## ► WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

This book is for anyone who is:

- interested in learning about ELT/TESOL and what the field has to offer
- considering applying for a place on a certificate course with a view to gaining an initial ELT/TESOL qualification
- currently taking an ELT/TESOL certificate course.

Certificate courses are taken each year by thousands of adults of all ages and from a wide range of backgrounds. These courses are open to anyone who has a standard of education that would enable them to find a place in a higher education institution. This means that you do not need to be a university graduate to get a place on a certificate course.

## ► WHY DO PEOPLE TAKE ELT/TESOL CERTIFICATE COURSES?

People take certificate courses for very many reasons. For example, perhaps you:

- are interested both in teaching and in English language
- want to support yourself during a 'gap year', before you continue with higher education
- are a recent university or college graduate, and see ELT/TESOL as a temporary career, until you decide what you want to do
- want to work in a country or countries other than your own
- have retired after a career in a different area but would like to continue working – ELT/TESOL can be a flexible and interesting choice
- are dissatisfied with your current job, or have been made redundant, and are seeking a change of career
- are a qualified teacher, and would like to expand your range of skills and qualifications to include an ELT/TESOL qualification
- are well qualified in another area, but living in a country where it is difficult to find employment in your field – you might be in this position if you accompany your partner overseas
- have children to take care of and would like flexible part-time work with opportunities for full-time employment and career development in the future.

If you take an ELT/TESOL certificate course, you will be working alongside people who are taking the course for any of the above reasons, and others besides.

## ► THE AIMS OF THIS BOOK

This book has four main aims:

### 1. To clarify the field of ELT/TESOL

If you are interested in ELT/TESOL, you may well have typed ‘English Language Teaching’, ‘ELT’, ‘TESOL’, or something similar, into the search engine of your internet browser. This will have resulted in hundreds of thousands of results; an unmanageable figure. You will also have come across further abbreviations such as **EFL**, **ESL**, **ESOL**, and **TESL** in the process, as well as some jargon, such as ‘explicit grammar instruction’. And this is before you have even visited one of the websites that your search produced.

If you then perhaps refined your search to include the word ‘certificate’, you would have received tens of thousands of results this time, and a brief glance at only the first page of results might well tell you that you can take a certificate course over a weekend, online, by distance-learning, full-time, part-time, in the UK, in Thailand and in New Zealand. If you explored some of the sites further, you would probably have come across further abbreviations and jargon, such as **CELTA**, **RSA**, **CertTESOL**, **UCLES**, **Cambridge ESOL**, and **guided observation**.

You might also have visited websites where visitors have expressed their confusion and uncertainty about which certificates are recognized and which are not, and what is meant by ‘recognized’. You will almost certainly find some discussion about the meaning of the word ‘**validation**’, and you might also have read about people who have had bad experiences with certificate courses.

Such an initial encounter with the field of ELT/TESOL can be overwhelming, bewildering and discouraging. But help is at hand. This book clarifies ELT/TESOL in general. It will tell you what all those abbreviations mean, and what goes on under the auspices of the profession. It will also explain the terms ‘validation’ and ‘recognition’.

### 2. To enable you to identify a good certificate course in order to become a qualified teacher of ELT/TESOL with excellent employment potential

Two qualifications in particular are widely-recognized by employers internationally. These are:

- the **Cambridge ESOL CELTA** (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults)
- the **Trinity College London CertTESOL** (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

While there are some differences, these two courses are sufficiently similar to allow them to be seen as representing one model or approach. This approach is referred to here as the ‘**CELTA/CertTESOL approach**’. It is both described in detail and used as the reference base for this book, because:

#### 4 Success on Your Certificate Course in English Language Teaching

- CELTA and CertTESOL courses and qualifications enjoy significant popularity and are widely recognized and accepted by employers internationally.
- Many alternative courses, available all over the world, take a comparable approach.

CELTA and CertTESOL courses, being widely accepted, are excellent options, but many courses that follow the same approach or a similar one could be good alternatives. There are too many such courses to be able to include them in a book of this kind, and little purpose would be served in doing so in any case, because of their close resemblance to CELTA/CertTESOL courses. This book therefore does not set out to compare and contrast alternatives to CELTA or CertTESOL courses, since reading the information about CELTA/CertTESOL courses will help you to distinguish between good alternative courses, and those that may be less useful because they lack certain key features. Reading this book, therefore, you will learn about the many features that a good alternative course should have, such as a minimum of six hours of teaching practice with classes of **language learners**.

### 3. To help you to succeed on your certificate course

Certificate courses are challenging experiences. Regardless of whether you opt for a part-time course or a full-time one, you will probably find the experience an intense and demanding one, because there is a great deal to cover in a short time. Research has shown that the people who do well are those who:

- are prepared
- understand their course very well
- know both what to expect and what is expected of them
- can implement a range of skills and strategies to help them to learn more effectively.

For these reasons, certificate courses are described in detail in this book. You will read about what happens during all the various certificate course components, such as teaching practice, **feedback** and **guided observation**, including what is expected of you at each stage. You will also read about the experiences of many former **course participants** and tutors, and you will learn about many skills and strategies that have been used in the past by successful participants.

‘Success’ in this context means:

- enjoying the experience and benefiting from it on a number of levels
- being certain at the end of your course that you have given your personal best
- graduating with a qualification that will enable you to find good employment with a reputable employer wherever you want to work.

#### 4. To help you to prepare for employment in ELT/TESOL

The last chapters of this book will provide you with information that can help you make the move from being a certificate course participant to being a qualified, practising, teacher. You will learn about:

- how to find a good position with a reputable employer
- what a good job should provide you with
- how to survive the first few weeks in your new teaching job
- how to continue to develop professionally
- how to practise 'good practice'.

Armed with all of the above information, you can be sure that your investment of time, money and effort into an ELT/TESOL certificate course will be rewarded with success.

### ▶ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I took a certificate course in English Language Teaching 24 years ago, and in doing so opened the door to a wide variety of experience in many countries, including the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand and Hong Kong. This experience includes teaching small groups of **multilingual** learners in English language schools such as International House, and teaching centres run by the **British Council**; lecturing large groups of **monolingual** undergraduates at national universities; designing national examinations; and developing teachers on certificate, diploma, PGCE, B.Ed. and Masters programmes.

Teacher education is one of my key interests, and initial teacher education in ELT was the focus of my Ph.D. research. This book is based upon that research.

Throughout my career, I have found that my professional practice has been informed more by a developing set of values and beliefs than by current trends in methodology. These values are reflected in my understandings of the qualities of a good English language teacher.

A good teacher in an ELT/TESOL context is:

- a democrat: equal to his or her students, but different from them as they are different from each other
- an enthusiast: for language, teaching, learning and people
- a pragmatist: able to adapt to the local context
- a guide: able to create learning opportunities and allow learning from mistakes
- a humanist: aware of his or her own foibles and weaknesses, as well as those of others, but free of cynicism
- an optimist: believing that he or she usually has a small but positive effect on learners' views of language, learning and culture

- a collaborator: needing colleagues for their views, ideas, opinions, arguments and experience
- a communicator: believing in the need to share rather than harbour ideas.

Such values as those outlined above underpin this book.


## ▶ USING THIS BOOK

It is likely that you will be reading this book during a very busy period in your life – while you are preparing to take a certificate course or while you are actually taking one. This book has been written with that in mind.

The content has been organized to reflect the process that you, as a potential certificate course participant, are likely to experience (from having an early general interest in the field, to wanting to know detailed information about the course and how to survive it, to career options upon graduating from the course), but there is no need to read it from cover to cover if you do not have the time to do so. It is recognized that readers will be at various stages in relation to the course, and you are encouraged to turn straight to whichever part of the book relates most closely to your interests and needs at the time.

Certain features of the book will help you to find the information you need:

- The contents and index pages provide you with detailed information about what is included in the book, and where to find it.
- The bullet points at the start of each chapter tell you what you will read about in the chapter.
- Each chapter is followed by a ‘takeaway’ section, which summarizes the main points made. If you have very limited time, try reading just these ‘takeaway’ sections.

As mentioned earlier, the icon  in the text directs you to the companion website at <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/brandt>. This website provides additional information and resources for anyone interested in becoming a teacher in ELT/TESOL, including:

- suggested reference texts and teaching aids
- links to websites, bookstores, professional organizations, journals and magazines
- blank **lesson plan** forms that you can print out to use on your course and after you have qualified
- a printable glossary of key abbreviations and terms used in this book and which you will be likely to encounter in the early stages of a career in ELT/TESOL – words that are included in the glossary are printed in bold when they are first used in this book
- quizzes related to each chapter, giving you the opportunity to check your understanding of what you have read.

It is suggested that you visit the website now, and print out a copy of the glossary. You can keep it with you and refer to it throughout your course and early career.

Another valuable feature of this book is the focus on the key strategies that will enable you to survive the course and enjoy the experience. However, this book is aimed at helping you not only to survive, but to succeed. In the introduction to Chapter 9, 'Succeeding', you will find sixteen strategies for success, drawn from the research on which this book is based. It would be a good idea to turn to this list now, and start to think about which ones you might want to address. The introduction is followed by a description of each strategy and a set of steps to help you to develop each.

It is recommended that you carry this book round with you when you are on your course so that you can turn to it when you need to, or if you have a few free minutes. Mark it up with a highlighter; scribble notes in the margins as they occur to you; turn over page corners – anything that will help you to learn from it, or help you to return to a particular point that you would like to follow up on. In other words, do whatever you need to do to get the most from it, when you need it. *Success on Your Certificate Course in English Language Teaching: a Guide to Becoming a Teacher in ELT/TESOL* has been designed to support you through a challenging experience. Make it work for you.