Frequently Used Acronyms  
for English Teaching

The Institute for Cross-Cultural Training

## **EFL - English as a Foreign Language**

Taught/learned in countries where English has no official status and is not commonly used as the medium of general communication, the medium of academic instruction or for other purposes such as government media. For example, those who teach English in Russia, Turkey and China teach English as a Foreign Language.

## **ESL - English as a Second Language**

English taught/learned in an English-speaking country such as the United States, Canada, Britain, Ireland, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. ESL learners are often (1) immigrants or refugees who plan to remain in the country or (2) students who may return to their native countries after a period of study. Although we use the term "second" language, English may be the learners' third, fourth, or even tenth language.

Some authors and practitioners in the field blur the contrast between ESL and EFL. North Americans often use ESL as a generic acronym to refer to teaching English to native speakers of other languages regardless of the country or environment in which instruction takes place; in other parts of the world, the terms EFL and ELT are preferred.

## **ELT - English Language Teaching or English Language Training**

Used most often outside North America; a generic term for ESL/EFL teaching/learning.

## **ESOL - English for Speakers of Other Languages**

Often used interchangeably with ESL or as a generic term for ESL/EFL.

## **EAP - English for Academic Purposes**

The teaching or learning of the varieties of English used in academic work (e.g., English for Theological Studies).

## **ESP - English for Specific Purposes**

The teaching or learning of the varieties of English used for specific job-related tasks or skills (e.g., Business English; Medical English; English for Aviation; English for Banking).

## **TEFL - Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

Teacher preparation degree or course work for EFL teachers.

## **TESL - Teaching English as a Second Language**

Teacher preparation degree or course work for ESL teachers. Some authors and practitioners blur the distinction between TESL and TEFL.

## **TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages**

Used interchangeably with TESL or as a generic term for TESL/TEFL.

## **TESOL - Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages**

The name of the international association of ESL/EFL teachers, materials writers, teacher trainers, curriculum developers, researchers and program administrators. Based in Alexandria, VA with affiliates in many other countries. [See the TESOL Organization](http://www.tesol.org/)

## **IATEFL - International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language**

Similar in membership and purpose to TESOL, an organization for ESL/EFL specialists. Based in the United Kingdom with branches in other countries. [International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language](http://www.iatefl.org/)

## **CELTA - Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults**

TEFL certificate course administered by the University of Cambridge and the Royal Society of Arts. [Cambridge English Language Assessment](http://www.cambridge-efl.org.uk/teaching)

## **TOEIC - Test of English for International Communication**

An English proficiency test used mostly by corporations and government agencies to assess the English language ability of their employees. [Education Testing Service TOEIC](http://www.ets.org/toeic)

## **TOEFL - Test of English as a Foreign Language**

An English proficiency test for internationals making application to colleges and universities in English-speaking countries. Administered in locations around the world, including the United States.   
[Education Testing Service TOEFL](http://www.ets.org/toefl)