



TESOL NEWLETTER

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES



Dear students, faculty, alumni, and friends,

As the academic year draws to a close, we find ourselves reflecting on all that this season has brought: growth, challenge, perseverance, and transformation. In a world where language continues to be both a powerful tool and, at times, a contested space, the work of TESOL educators feels especially urgent. Our program remains deeply committed to preparing teachers who not only support language development, but who also honor students' identities, advocate for linguistic justice, and create inclusive, empowering learning environments.

This summer, we had the joy of celebrating our graduating TESOL candidates as they completed their clinical placements. From transitional kindergarten to adult education classrooms, they engaged in hands-on teaching that stretched their thinking and refined their practice. Their journeys culminated in our end-of-year Capstone Presentations, where they shared thoughtful action research and showcased their areas of specialization in TESOL.

In this final issue of the year, we also feature reflections from graduating students and faculty, capturing the spirit and values of our learning community. You'll find words of insight, gratitude, and hope from those who have walked this path together. We also highlight the ongoing impact of our graduates through our alumni profile and teaching tips sections, where recent alumni generously share their journeys and pedagogical wisdom from classrooms around the world.

Now, our newest graduates step into their next chapters, joining the global Pepperdine TESOL network of educators making a difference in Japan, Spain, China, South Korea, and many other parts of the world. We are proud to see them carry forward the heart of our program—leading with integrity, empathy, and a vision for inclusive education.

We hope they continue to stay connected with us as they grow in their careers and continue the work of building bridges through language. This is, and always has been, the purpose of our program: to prepare teachers who not only teach English, but who also foster connection, cultural humility, and justice through the power of language.

With gratitude,
Kevin Wong, Ph.D.
TESOL Chair

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Edited by Feidana Yalikun

Memories @ Pepperdine ♦

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The One With the First Day of Orientation



The One With the First Conference



The One With the Symposium



The One With the Thanksgiving Dinner



The One Where They Present Their Research



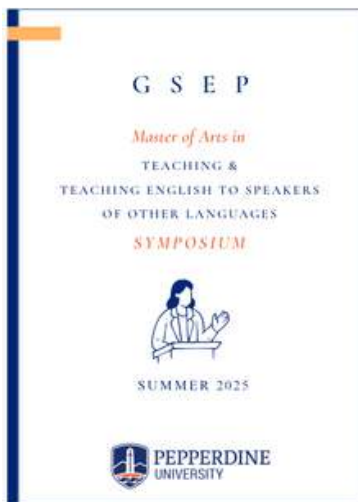
The One With the Site Visit



The One With the Class Potluck



The One in the Large Convention Center



The One with the Last Goodbye



Academic Excellence in Specialization Award - Aya Shinkawa



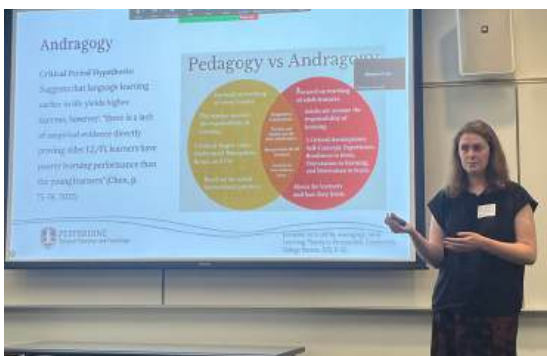
Outstanding Practicum Award - Chao Wu



Pioneer in TESOL Award - Maria Monica Molano



TESOL Leadership Award - Zalina Zainol



Excellence in Teaching Award - Ashley Parker



A space for heartfelt messages as we turn the page.



Aaron Horner

This year flew by faster than I ever imagined. Through this program, I've come to realize that much of the real learning, the "how" of teaching, truly begins once we step into our own classrooms. While we've explored countless theories and pedagogies, it's through experience that we learn how to adapt and apply them meaningfully. The friendships and connections I've made with all of you will continue to be one of my most valuable resources, and I hope to carry those relationships with me wherever I go. Looking ahead, I've accepted an ESL teaching position at Santa Monica College for the fall semester. After that, I plan to move to Guatemala to gain dual citizenship and teach at a school my family is connected to. Eventually, I hope to teach in Korea and finally put my Korean language studies to use. I've also been inspired by my incredible Chinese classmates to explore teaching opportunities in China. I'm excited to see more of the world and continue building bridges through language.



Hua Huang

In the blink of an eye, my TESOL journey at Pepperdine came to an end. I'm deeply grateful for professors who inspired me and classmates who supported me. Returning to school after years in the workforce was challenging, but this journey reminded me why I love teaching—helping others find their voice in a new language. I've learned so much, not just about language, but about people, connection, and growth. I'm excited for what's ahead and will always look back on this chapter with a full heart.



Yijin Wang

My journey in the TESOL program has been transformative, both professionally and personally. From our first class discussions to the final capstone presentations, I've grown into a more reflective, confident, and culturally responsive educator. I'm especially grateful to my professors and cohort for their support, insight, and encouragement throughout this experience. One quote that stayed with me is: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." As I prepare to return to China, my goal is to innovate English education in underdeveloped regions and support future educators in creating inclusive, student-centered classrooms. Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey—I'll carry these lessons with me always.



Yingdan Liu

My graduate program has been an incredibly rewarding journey filled with both academic growth and personal connections. I am truly grateful to my professors for their inspiring guidance and continuous support. Their passion for teaching and deep expertise helped me develop a stronger foundation in TESOL and shaped my teaching philosophy. I also feel lucky to have studied alongside such thoughtful and encouraging classmates. Our shared experiences, discussions, and collaborations not only enriched my learning but also built friendships that I deeply cherish. This program has given me both the knowledge and the confidence to pursue my goals as an educator. I will carry these memories, lessons, and relationships with me into the next chapter of my professional journey.

A space for heartfelt messages as we turn the page.



Zalina Zainol

Heartfelt thanks to Dr. Kevin Wong and all the professors at Pepperdine University for your dedication and support throughout the TESOL Master's Program. Dr. Wong, thank you for your sincere guidance and listening ear. Dr. Nooshan, your encouragement kept me going. Dr. Chen, thank you for valuing my experience, and Dr. Harding, for acknowledging my knowledge. Professor Kristle, I appreciated your practical insights, honest advice, and those unforgettable donuts! Professor Van Houten, thank you for giving space to share our voices. To my Mei Mei—Katrina, Yaya, Star, Cathy, and Melody—thank you for your warmth, care, and friendship. Aaron and Monica, you truly lifted me during tough times. Monica, thank you especially for being my tech guide, late-night lifeline, and sister. I will miss every moment we shared. Let's stay connected—and if I ever open a school, I hope to work alongside each of you again.



Ashley Parker

My time at Pepperdine has been an answered prayer. I am so grateful to my professors, Pepperdine staff, and my cohort for supporting me in my TESOL journey. I plan to begin working as an ESL instructor at an International school in Austin, Texas.



Professor Kevin Van Houten

It has been an honor to work with such a dedicated group of educators. In our semester together, diving into serious topics of ethics and personal growth, I have learned so much from all of you, and I am excited to see the direction that your educational and career journeys take you.



Professor Kristle Domondon

Keep going, keep growing and keep showing up for your future students. I'm super blessed to have been a small part of your journey.

Hello, my name is Teresa Jimenez. Since completing my MA in TESOL, I've had the opportunity to teach English to students from a wide range of backgrounds and age groups. After graduating, I moved to Valencia, Spain, where I began working in the local school system teaching conversational English to adult learners. These classes focused on real-life scenarios such as making phone calls, ordering food, business interactions, and casual conversations. At the same time, I worked at a British school where I taught younger students, focusing on grammar and phonics. Currently, I'm a Master Teacher at Bina, an English-accredited international online school serving students ages 4-12. We teach all core subjects in English, and my current students are from Brazil, Canada, and the U.S., though we also welcome learners from across the world. Teaching in such a global environment has been incredibly rewarding and eye-opening.



TERESA JIMENEZ
TESOL 22'



HOW HAS THE MA IN TESOL SUPPORTED YOU IN YOUR CAREER TRAJECTORY



The MA in TESOL gave me the tools and confidence to connect with diverse learners. It shaped my approach to language education and continues to lead me to exciting opportunities in the field. Through rigorous coursework and practical experience, I gained a deeper understanding of language acquisition, pedagogy, and cross-cultural communication. I learned to design inclusive curricula, adapt to varied learning styles, and foster meaningful engagement in the classroom. This foundation has empowered me to grow not only as an educator but also as a lifelong learner. Each new teaching experience builds on what I learned during the program, reaffirming its lasting impact on my professional journey.



As an educator in an Intensive English Program, I follow a Communicative Language Teaching approach because I believe students don't just learn English through my instruction — they develop their skills through meaningful communication and connection with each other. I want my classroom to feel like a safe space where students are encouraged to take risks, share their own experiences, and grow more confident using English in real ways. I also believe that students' voices, backgrounds, and opinions bring valuable perspectives to every lesson, so I make it a priority to design activities that help them express themselves and learn from each other. I see my role as a guide who creates opportunities for genuine interaction, builds trust, and celebrates every student's progress, big or small.

One method I use that really supports this is a combination of a Word of the Day, a related writing prompt, and Reading Circles.

WORD OF THE DAY + WRITING PROMPT + READING CIRCLES

Objective:

- Build vocabulary through real-life, personal connections.
- Strengthen writing and speaking skills together.
- Create a supportive space where every student's story is valued.
- Bring Communicative Language Teaching to life with authentic communication.

How I Use It:

- I start each class with a Word of the Day that students can connect to their own lives (e.g., brave, patient, diligent).
- We discuss the meaning and share simple examples together.
- Students are given an example response and sentence frames to help them get started.
- They respond to a short writing prompt using the word (e.g., "Describe a time when you were brave.").
- Students form Reading Circles to read what they wrote aloud and discuss their ideas.
- In circles, students ask each other questions, share similar experiences, and learn more about one another.
- We wrap up with a short whole-class reflection so students can share something interesting they learned about a classmate.

Why It Works:

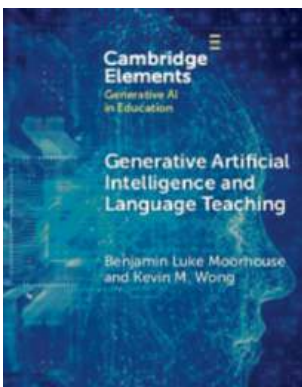
- Encourages students to practice writing and speaking authentically, with a clear example and supportive frame.
 - Helps students feel more confident reading their own words aloud.
 - Builds trust, community, and respect for each student's ideas.
 - Supports Communicative Language Teaching by making communication meaningful and real.
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Community Shoutouts ✨

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Celebrating the Pepperdine TESOL community and their inspiring impact in language education! This spring, we're shining a spotlight on the outstanding accomplishments of our members who continue to lead, innovate, and uplift multilingual learning spaces.

Publication



Generative Artificial Intelligence and Language Teaching
Cambridge University Press

Authors:

Dr. Benjamin Luke Moorhouse

Dr. Kevin Wong (Faculty)



Interactive and Effective: Pedagogical Strategies in Online Mandarin Teaching for Young Immigrant Children
(Accepted)

Authors:

Dr. Xintian Ji (TESOL Alumni)

Dr. Lu (Lucy) Yi (TESOL Faculty & staff)

Dr. Kevin Wong (Faculty)

Conference Presentation



Empowering Excellence in Mandarin Dual Language Programs: From Foundations to Practice

Presenter: Yiyuan (Tiffany) Zhang
(TESOL Alumni)



Community Shoutouts ✦

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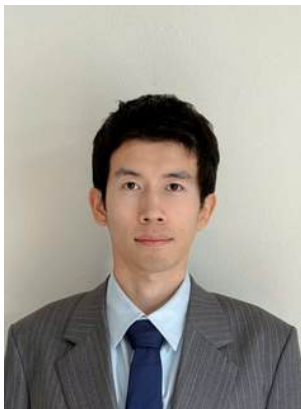
Celebrating the Pepperdine TESOL community and their inspiring impact in language education! This spring, we're shining a spotlight on the outstanding accomplishments of our members who continue to lead, innovate, and uplift multilingual learning spaces.

Dissertation



***Leadership, Andragogy, and Critical Reflection:
Addressing the Education Debt Owed to Emergent Bilingual
Students through Translanguaging***

Dr. Jacobo Corone (TESOL Faculty)



***Investigating The Impact of a Study Abroad Program on
Shaping Undergraduate Students' Development of
Intercultural Competence: An Ethnographic Study***

Dr. Jiangfeng Li (TESOL Alumni)

Chair: *Dr. Kevin Wong*

Dr. Eric Hamilton, & *Dr. Greg Muger*



***The Influence of Educational Games on Young Bilingual
Children's Intrinsic Motivation and Vocabulary
Development***

Dr. Xintian Ji (TESOL Alumni)

Chair: *Dr. Kevin Wong*

Dr. Reyna Garcia Ramos, & *Dr. Robin Harvey*



International Journal of Applied Linguistics

In a recent issue of **International Journal of Applied Linguistics**, **Zhaoyi Pan** (Mahidol University) published a study titled “**Conversational Humor in Intercultural Communication.**”

This study explores how English learners from Thailand, Indonesia, and Myanmar use humor during everyday conversations in English. These learners spoke English as a lingua franca (ELF), meaning English was not their first language. The article focuses on cases where humor was not understood or even caused offense during intercultural communication.

Key Findings:

- **Not All Humor Works Across Cultures:** Out of 112 attempts at humor, only 77 were successful. The rest were either not appreciated or were seen as impolite.
- **Main Causes of Failure:**
 - **Limited English Skills:** Some speakers could not clearly express the joke. Others did not understand key words or phrases.
 - **Lack of Cultural Awareness:** Jokes about movies, folklore, or social customs were often misunderstood due to unfamiliarity.
 - **Teasing:** Some jokes involved teasing that was seen as criticism of the other person’s country or culture. This led to discomfort or even arguments.
- **Examples:**
 - A Thai speaker said “nail” instead of “snail,” ruining the punchline.
 - A joke about “moths to a flame” failed because the listener did not know the expression.
 - A Burmese speaker was offended when an Indonesian friend joked about Burmese traditional art.

Insights on Humor and Politeness:

- **Teasing Can Be Risky:** Even among friends, jokes that mention cultural stereotypes or national traits can be misunderstood. What is funny to one person may feel disrespectful to another.
- **Different Reactions:** Some participants were more tolerant of teasing, while others saw it as impolite. This shows how individual preferences and cultural pride play a big role in humor.

Teaching Suggestions:

- **Improve English Skills:** Better vocabulary and fluency can help learners express and understand humor more clearly.
- **Teach Intercultural Awareness:** English learners should be taught how different cultures view politeness and humor. They should learn to recognize sensitive topics.
- **Include Humor in the Classroom:** Teachers can use humor examples to explain language, build rapport, and discuss boundaries.

This study shows that humor is a powerful but sensitive tool in intercultural communication. Teachers and learners should use humor carefully, especially when talking about culture.

To learn more about the study, its methods, and detailed results, click [here](#).

Current Job Opportunities ✦

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Below is a list of job opportunities curated for our TESOL alumni. This list is representative of jobs that TESOL graduates can apply for and is not meant to be exhaustive. For ongoing TESOL updates and job opportunities, please join our [Pepperdine TESOL LinkedIn Group](#).

JOB TITLE	LOCATION	FULL/PART TIME	APPLICATION DEADLINE	SOURCE
Copywriter	Los Angeles, CA	Full-Time	Until Filled	Meta
English Teacher	Los Angeles, CA	Full-Time	Until Filled	Aspire Public Schools
Case Manager	Torrance, CA	Full-Time	Until Filled	Harbor Regional Center
Community Insights Reviewer	Los Angeles, CA	Full-Time	Until Filled	Because We Care Podcast
Sales Representative	Los Angeles, CA	Full-Time	Until Filled	The Preferred Prepaid dba XYZies
Lecturer	Los Angeles, CA	Part-Time	Until Filled	Cal State University LA
英语网站编辑	Dalian, China	Full-Time	Until Filled	HUNGRY STUDIO
大模型英文标注岗	Xian, China	Full-Time	Until Filled	朗昇网络
Executive Legal Assistant	Kelowna, BC	Full-Time	Until Filled	Montgomery Miles & Stone Law Firm
General Manager	Markham, ON	Full-Time	Until Filled	Red Whale Capital

Take the Next Step ✦

FOR MORE INFORMATION, WATCH OUR TESOL INFORMATION SESSION BELOW:



Take the Next Step

Reach out to us to learn more about Pepperdine's MA in Learning English of Other Languages (TESOL) Program

Get In Touch

Fill out the Request Information form to learn more and get in contact with an Enrollment Officer.

[REQUEST INFORMATION](#)

Attend an Info Session

Experience an In-depth overview and meet program leaders.

[SEE THE SCHEDULE](#)

Start Your Application

Submit the application form early to meet scholarship and enrollment deadline. It takes less than 15 minutes.

[APPLY NOW](#)

