

For Immediate Release

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TESOL International Association Announces 2026 Award Recipients

Alexandria, Va. (February 18, 2026) – TESOL International Association (TESOL) is proud to announce the recipients of its 2026 awards recognizing excellence, leadership, and service in the field of English language teaching.

“I am deeply impressed with the dedication and passion these outstanding professionals bring to our profession. I couldn’t be prouder to call them my colleagues,” said TESOL President Justin Shewell.

The following honorees will be recognized during the upcoming TESOL 2026 International Convention & Expo, March 24-27, in Salt Lake City, Utah:

TESOL Teacher of the Year

Rashad Ahmed, an associate professor at Jacksonville State University, is a Fulbright alumnus with a doctorate from the University of Memphis. A former chair of TESOL’s Applied Linguistics Interest Section, his current research investigates applications of artificial intelligence in language learning.

The James E. Alatis Award for Service to TESOL

Luciana C. de Oliveira, professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, has served TESOL and its affiliates in many capacities, including serving as TESOL president. She has been a recipient and mentor for the TESOL Leadership Mentoring Program.

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TESOL Award for Excellence in Research

Beatriz González-Fernández, an associate professor in applied linguistics and TESOL at the University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, explores second and foreign language English acquisition and teaching to advance linguistic theory and inform evidence-based pedagogy.

TESOL Outstanding Advocate Honor Award

Hilal Peker, an associate professor of TESOL, Fulbright advisor, and director of the Office of Competitive Fellowships at Florida Gulf Coast University, researches TESOL leadership, inclusive dual-language immersion, bullying-victimization, and teacher education technologies.

The Ron Chang Lee Award for Excellence in Classroom Technology

Abdias Luque Cruz, a Panamanian educator at Universidad de Panamá and ITSE, integrates innovation into English language teaching, ensuring digital tools are effective even in environments with limited technological integration.

Vance Stevens Education Technology Mentoring Award

Elsie Enanga, a dedicated EFL educator from Yaoundé, Cameroon, and alumna of the SUSI educators program at the University of Montana, has developed instructional YouTube content for the Cameroonian Ministry of Secondary Education and contributed to the British Council's English Connects teacher-training video series and webinars.

Leadership Mentoring Program Award

- **Dan Zhou**, Ph.D. candidate in TESOL teacher education at Monash University, conducts research that examines teacher professional learning, agency, and the contextual factors shaping teacher learning.
- **János Ujlaki**, an English and mathematics teacher with almost 20 years of experience, works as a lecturer and teacher trainer and is a Ph.D. candidate.
- **Zhongfeng Tian**, an associate professor of bilingual education at Rutgers University–Newark, conducts research that bridges bilingual and language education, teacher education, second language writing, and generative AI through decolonial, translingual, and justice-oriented perspectives.

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For more information about each of the honorees and the TESOL Awards Program, visit the [main awards page](#).

About TESOL International Association

TESOL International Association is the trusted global community for knowledge and expertise in English language teaching. TESOL advances the professional expertise in English language teaching to speakers of other languages in multilingual contexts worldwide through professional learning, research, standards, and advocacy. In principle and in practice, TESOL values professionalism, respect, integrity, and lifelong learning and seeks diverse and inclusive participation within the field of English language teaching. TESOL promotes equitable representation, engagement, and broad access to professional opportunities for all and works to eliminate any kind of discrimination. TESOL is a professional community of more than 8,000 English language professionals representing more than 100 countries. For more information, please visit www.tesol.org.

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