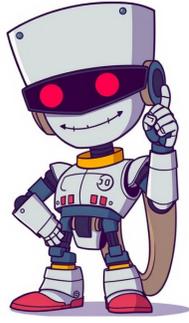


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Please enable JavaScript in your browser so you will be able to continue using this application. Way back in the day, anyone who didn't speak English and wanted/needed to, learnt "English", just as we learn "Spanish", "Japanese" or whatever language we want/need to learn. Millions in the world still learn "English" - "inglés" - "英語". Most outside the EFL/ESL industry see no difference between ESL and EFL - though they are not the same. What then are the differences? A Potted History of Teaching English People have been learning English since Angles, Saxons and Jutes overran, enslaved, settled and intermarried their way across later-to-be England and South-East Scotland, completely changing linguistic-cultural landscapes on the way. Merchants, monk-missionaries and others learnt English, and the English learnt other languages. By 1066 England had become a European nation wealthy in learning, religion, government, trade, metal-working, gold, stonework, embroidery and so on, with contacts as far away as Hungary and Constantinople. Before 1066 some Normans had learnt English; after 1066 many more did - even William the Conqueror tried. When England began collecting colonies, English joined Spanish and other new empire languages. Ambassadors and traders learnt English ("Ingles" in Scotland), just as the English and Scots learnt the languages of the countries they dealt with. French and Latin were useful - but never enough. The first English teachers - priests, scholar-writers, merchants - were unqualified to teach English, or often to teach at all. Formal teaching meant grammar-translation; however, most people learnt without any real teaching until into the 1900s.They immigrated, got colonised, worked in Commonwealth or American ships - in short, they "picked the language up". Though language teacher training developed in the late 1800s in schools such as Berlitz, it was not until the 60s that teacher training started blossoming; however, into the 80s and beyond in many countries it was enough to be "native" and a college graduate (sometimes not even) to be an English teacher - or of any other language. English? ESL? EFL? Does an "English teacher" teach English to learners who speak English as their first/only language, or English the language? Very different skills are needed, and so English as a Foreign Language, EFL, and English as a Second Language, ESL, were coined. Teachers for native English students know that their students know English - they don't have to explain "say" and "tell" and so focus on subject matter. In EFL/ESL, the teacher can take nothing for granted, everything is new to the student. 10% of the world's population live in English-speaking countries or countries like India[i], where India is the language of higher education, and many grow up speaking English fluently. English is a foreign language for the other 90%. EFL learners have all the difficulties of practicing English outside school that Irish or Australians doing high-school French have. Around 10% of the world are EFL users/learners; 80% of the world speaks no English. ESL and EFL in action There is no difference between ESL and EFL where the language itself is concerned, but rather in syllabus content, why and where the language is learnt. ESL was coined to refer to those learners living in non-English-speaking households in English-speaking countries, English being notionally their second language. Teachers teach in English-speaking countries to those living there who speak varying amounts of English - and often no English. There is important coursework for life in English-speaking country of residence; in some countries, immigrants have to pass language and culture tests for residency and/or citizenship. Most ESL students are immigrants who need to be able to fit into the new society[i]. How well this goes often depends on how much government assistance they are offered. Other ESL students include Spanish speakers whose ancestors preceded the English-speaking colonisers in the southern states of the USA, when they were Spanish colonies. Deeper culture-linguistic problems are faced by First Nations People, such as the Navajo and Cherokee. While Spanish has the respect of a strong literary and empire history, Indigenous peoples have often been treated as third-class non-citizens. Often such ESL students may well speak English, but sometimes of a kind often considered substandard. English teaching for such students often blends into the teaching of English to native speakers. ESL is NOT "Second" because English is widely spoken, or because it is the language of choice for international communication (less than 20% of the world population speak it well enough for that). Often it is not even a language of choice - many must learn English for academic or professional purposes, while in some parts of the world, French, Arabic and other languages are musts. EFL refers to English learning in schools, colleges and universities around the world in non-English speaking countries. Cultural content is more international than in the typical ESL class. In addition, every year hundreds and hundreds of thousands go to English-speaking countries to do intensive courses in dedicated EFL schools AND to practise English outside the classroom, doing General English, English for Specific Purposes, for Academic Purposes, or to prepare for an exam, such as TOEFL or IELTS. They then go home (or elsewhere) to use English for work, study, to teach English, to travel in the world. Though some attend EFL schools to live in an English-speaking country, most do English for international communication, such as scientists as part of their research careers. Many are multilingual, and all use English alongside their other language(s) as needs be. And - there are those that simply like English, often not even needing English. ESL teacher training generally fits into State Education qualifications, teachers or assistants that specialise in English language teaching. EFL teaching qualifications are from Universities or EFL schools, often not in the State system - and often graded lower in Educational Qualifications hierarchies. The most common are training programs of 100-120 hours, sometimes with some hours of assessed teaching practice. 4 to 5 weeks of full time study. All this makes for differences in pay rates and recognition. In short, our students learn English, and we teach it. In classes in an English-speaking country for the purposes of life in that country, we do ESL; in all other cases, we do EFL. Misuse and misunderstanding mean that such terms can take on meanings not intended by those who coined them. In the next article, we look at the variety of acronyms that replace EFL and ESL, such as TESL, TEFL, ESOL, TESOL, EAL, ELL, EL, ELF and Global English. [i] The statistics in this article are calculated from the following sites, and are based on populations of countries as an average of the total world population. For non-native learners/users of English, the statistics and/or estimates are based on how many learners of English are registered in schools, and unverifiable estimates of other non-natives who learn or use English. [ii] Such statistics are hard to come by, and mainly come from census reports, such as these : Score comparisons are only an estimation of equivalent scores, and cannot be taken as a guarantee of an actual score on any external test.

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