

ELT NEWS

**How, When and Why: A Brief History of the Founding of TESOL Greece**

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Today, in 2003, ELT teachers are used to choosing from among a wide variety of professional development courses, seminars, international conferences, book exhibitions and related events. There are BA and MA programmes available from universities both in Greece and abroad, a number of teacher training and 'train the trainers' courses, as well as a variety of conferences and book exhibits covering the needs and interests of ELT professionals.

In the 1960s, a number of ELT centres, such as the British Council, the gradually developing Hellenic American Union (HAU), Deree Pierce and others, were active in organizing short seminars and events, but there was not much communication among these centres, nor were the events made available to all teachers and other ELT professionals in Greece. The major focus of all language centres at that time was teaching English and offering or participating in English language exams.

The late Maricelle Meyer, one of the most knowledgeable leaders in developing the EFL field in Greece and a long-time Director of the HAU and a SELETE instructor, was one of the first to speak of the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language and, in 1962, conducted teacher training seminars at the HAU.

The decade of the 1970's was one of great activity and change in Greek ELT. The publishing world started growing. Coursebooks became more colourful and gradually less structural – what we would now describe as teacher and learner-friendly. Longman Publications, headed by John Drossos and Bart Ullstein, took the lead, offering numerous teacher training seminars conducted by talented trainers such as Mark Palmer, Jan Barber and others. Alan Barnett at the British Council organized a number of teacher training seminars and invited teachers outside the Council to attend. The HAU established its first teacher training programme, and Deree Pierce, Downtown Centre, organized a two-day seminar on the Silent Way. However, these were still events known to and attended by a small number of ELT professionals.

TESOL Greece started 'emerging' as an idea in late 1978, when Terry Carroll came to Greece as the HAU Academic Director. He and Lilika Couri (HAU Associate Academic Director), started exploring the possibility of establishing such a non-profit, volunteer association. Terry had been instrumental in establishing TESOL Portugal the year before, and he felt that Greece, with all of its interest and activity in ELT, needed a forum where teachers could share and exchange ideas. At that time, there were only three TESOL affiliates in Europe: Italy, Spain and Portugal.

The founding of TESOL Greece is the result of the vision, interest and efforts of a small number of ELT professionals who shared the same principles and who respected and trusted each other as individuals. Terry and Lilika contacted friends and colleagues such as Vicky Megas and Judy Binkowski (The New Centre), Bessie Dendrinou (the University of Athens), Jasper Utley, Alan Barnett and Liz Taylor (the

British Council), George and Suzanne Salimbene, Olga Julius, Georgia Marketos (Deree Pierce), Maricelle Meyer, Costas Rompapas (the Ziridis Schools), Triantafyllos Triantafyllou (the State Sector), Maria Koumatou (BYRON Association of FL teachers in Greece), Michael Bash (Anatolia College, Thessaloniki), Klemes Seraphimides, Bruce Huston, James Watt, Sue Jones (ELT publishers' representatives in Greece), and they, in turn, contacted other friends and colleagues who were also interested. A 'brainstorming/let's explore the possibility' meeting was suggested to all contacted, and January 30, 1980, the feast day of the Three Archons, patron saints of education, was symbolically selected in order to present the idea of TESOL Greece to ELT people from all parts of Greece and from all sectors. The meeting was held at the HAU. (See the list of persons who attended at the end of the article.)

The TESOL Greece mission statement was:

- to be open to everyone involved in ELT all over Greece
- to be a non-profit, volunteer, professional association and not a labor union
- to increase awareness of the ELT field
- to introduce major authors and/or ELT personalities, from Greece
- and abroad to its members so they would have a chance to meet and learn from them
- to give all teachers a platform to present and share ideas
- to use the association as a vehicle for language development
- to provide an opportunity for teachers to look at all ELT books and materials available and
- to establish affiliates in other cities/parts of Greece

Terry Carroll explained the mission of TESOL Greece, and the idea was warmly received and welcomed. A decision was made to hold the new organization's first convention as soon as possible, and May 1980 was selected. Nominations were taken to form an ad hoc committee to explore and meet the Greek legal requirements for such an organization, including designing and writing a charter, non-profit status, etc., and to organize the first convention. The following were elected: Terry Carroll (ad hoc Chair); Bessie Dendrinou (ad hoc Vice-Chair); Lilika Couri (ad hoc Secretary General); Vicky Megas (ad hoc committee member); Robert Sugg (ad hoc committee member).

TESOL Greece's First International Convention was held on Friday-Sunday, May 2-4, 1980 at the HAU. The ad hoc committee members and a small number of the HAU teaching and administrative staff, such as Suzanne Antonaros, Marisa Constantinides, Philip Bitzas, Eleni Giannopoulou, Zoe Lyrakou, Christina Kyrka and Yiannis Meletiou worked hard to make the convention a reality. The Convention opened Friday evening with a very successful book exhibition, one of the largest at that time, and a cocktail party. About 320 people attended, and the membership fee was 300 drachmas.

The Convention, which was warmly welcomed by most people, featured Mary Finocchiaro and Efstathios Efstathiadis as plenary speakers and Harold Fish as invited speaker. There were also three roundtable discussions with local and international

participants, chaired by B. Dendrinou, S. Antonaros, and D. Tsekouras, respectively. This first Convention was a great success and served as a model for all subsequent TESOL Greece conventions.

On Saturday, June 6th, 1981, TESOL Greece's first AGM and elections were held. The results were as follows: Lilika Couri (Chair); Costas Rompapas (Vice-Chair); Robert S. Calfogolou (Secretary General); Robert Sugg (Treasurer); Vicky Megas, Maricelle Meyer, Barbara Seraphimedou, Anna-Maria Giannopoulou, Philip Bitzas (Members at Large); Alexander Adams, Judy Binkowski, the late Koula Geronikolopoulou, Jack Logan (Alternate Members); Elizabeth Hammond, Vaso Kolentini, Mary Drossou (Oversight Committee Members); Ioannikios Mastoros (Alternative Oversight Committee Members).

The Board's first decision was to make Terry Carroll, who was leaving Greece shortly afterwards, an Honorary Member of TESOL Greece in appreciation of his contribution to the organization.

Thanks to the dream, foresight and hard work of these founding members, contributions by subsequent board members, and continued support from members and publishers, TESOL Greece has grown into the largest European TESOL affiliate and has served as a model and mentor for other European affiliates. The TESOL Greece Newsletter is considered to be one of the best affiliate newsletters. Our organization and its accomplishments are something we can all be proud of.