



Content list available at <http://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir>

***Iranian Journal  
of  
Language Teaching Research***  
BOOK REVIEW



## ***The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching***

Kristen Fung <sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *University of South Florida, US*


Is the seemingly endless search through libraries and bookstores for references, guidance, and authentic resources over forever? Has the invention of the internet with its ever-growing collection of multimedia information made quality knowledge instantly accessible for everyone? Will the manifold forms of non-digital access and storage that were wrought well at birth endure or die? The digital superhighway may seem to endow limitless opportunities, but it has only added another layer of required knowledge to the search, digital literacy. Now, only those with experience in the advanced levels of research *and* are digitally savvy can discern if what is available is genuine quality or just quantity. In the last two decades alone, blogs, vlogs, and the self-publishing industry have changed the landscape of educational resources. They created a labyrinth of questionable sources and outlets often masked in the clothing of reputable works. As more peer-reviewed journals consider the way of free access versus controlled distribution, and more publications take the path of e-books and digital downloads, questions arise as to how reliable the information available really is.

Encyclopedias, once a mainstay, had such broad readership that they occupied academic and home library shelves. The first encyclopedia in the English language, *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, spent 244 years dispersing knowledge on paper before it shifted to a strictly online format. This was a seemingly natural step following in the world's digital footprints as new emerging technologies created and eliminated different barriers to accessing academic information (Cauz, 2013). However, it was also a step into uncertain territory when it came to who would have access and who would be marginalized with the new online format. Now, a new encyclopedia warrants review as it makes a bold attempt to reduce the distance between research and practice and unite them in readership at a time when Covid-19 has the world socially distanced.

*The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, the first-ever such publication for the TESOL International Association since its founding in 1966, did not know its position in future events when it was conceived, but has now taken its place in history as a timely reference supporting educators and researchers during Covid-19. It has earned a coveted spot of recognition as the winner of the 2019 PROSE Award for Multivolume Reference in the

\* Corresponding author: University of South Florida, United States  
Email address: [kristenfung@usf.edu](mailto:kristenfung@usf.edu)

© Urmia University Press

 10.30466/ijltr.2021.121050

Humanities Category from over 540 contributions in 49 categories. It also received an honorable mention for RUSA's 2019 Dartmouth Medal.

*The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* looks to the future, taking a trusted literary form once commonplace before the days of the internet, and reinventing it to offer researchers and educators a bridge towards the digital future. At a time when everyone is adapting to the digital revolution, it answers the current need for meaningful access points for a readership comprised of the "communities of practice that consume, but rarely contribute to, the corpus of literature" (Davis, 2011).

*The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* continues the digital evolution in a direction that is inclusive and expands the boundaries of literature readership with its versatility and high usability. It has not lost its traditional roots with two versions: a hardcopy version (ISBN: 9781118784228) and an online access version (ISBN: 9781118784235). The latter includes an easy-to-use keyword search for the instant access lifestyle of today's modern digital consumer. It brings communities of practice together with cutting edge research by connecting teachers, educators, and practitioners directly impacting the lived experiences of language learners with meaningful and contemporary literature meant for implementation on Monday morning.

This exciting publication by John Wiley & Sons, in collaboration with TESOL International Association, is the brainchild of Editor-in-Chief, John I. Liontas, Associate Professor of FLE at the University of South Florida, a pioneer in the field of idiomatics and second language acquisition. He has held an array of positions in local, state, regional, national, and international academic bodies earning him dozens of teaching awards and honors at each level. To ensure that the encyclopedia materials meet the highest standards, notable editors and an international advisory board collaborate with scholars and expert practitioners who contribute to the entries.

Beginning with the Preface, Liontas' purpose for *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* is clear: "to explore the theoretical and practical aspects of English language instruction by providing an essential, go-to reference resource for educators, professionals, researchers, and students worldwide."

The encyclopedia's appeal can be recognized by expert and general education audiences in search of reliable information on themes ranging from *Teaching English as an International Language* and *Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)*, through *Teaching Grammar and Vocabulary* to *Assessment and Evaluation*. These are only six of the fourteen themes included in the eight-volume print edition, which covers over five thousand eight hundred pages. Collectively, all volumes offer scholars, graduate and undergraduate students, and English language teachers quick access to entries that are authoritative and practical.

Already lauded as the definitive reference resource in the English Language Teaching field, *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* is easy to navigate. Over 780 entries (in the print version) are ordered from A to Z within each theme. Its content follows a three-part *modus operandi* to structure each entry. First, "Framing the Issue" examines the topic and includes succinct operation definitions and explanations. Next, "Making the Case" entails discussion on key theoretical and/or research considerations and findings. Finally, "Pedagogical Implications" includes practical applications, guidelines, and recommendations that can immediately be put into action with students. The only exception here is the theme of *English as an International Language*, which addresses issues such as language, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Entries synthesize different theories and research on topics such as "assessment norms," and "English as a lingua franca," and "the role of the first language," giving the reader increased perspective on

the broad international field. This content is directly related to the issues that impact English language teaching and learning.

In addition to a comprehensive bibliography of primary source references for each entry, readers can quickly look to other reliable sources for valid information or expansion of ideas by referring to additional readings in a 'See Also' section after each entry. The encyclopedia is not just useful but current and comprehensive. An additional, ever-updating, online portion of *Current Trends and Future Directions in English Language Teaching* surpasses the competition with its relativity, offering the latest developments in research. Semiannual installments make it current to support or refute theoretical arguments or positions, provide evidence of theory in practice during Covid-19, new pedagogical trends in tech-driven spaces, and give context to the ever-changing landscape of English language teaching.

The average entry length is between 2,500 and 3,000 words, making it an extensive yet well-organized collection and an empowering reference tool for the researcher, practicing language professional, teacher, or student (secondary, college, or graduate levels). *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* is a trustworthy source for experts and those who seek easy to digest dependable knowledge. Its innovative structure makes the field's knowledge immediately accessible and, importantly, comprehensible for a broad audience in the global context of English language teaching.

When Editor-in-Chief, John I. Liontas, set out to create this resource, he was driven by the desire to “make this reference work different from all other encyclopedias available... to serve as indispensable professional resource for all ELT/ESL practitioners everywhere” (Sadeghi, 2017, p. 149). This came into fruition with *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* as it brought together theory and practice in a package that is straightforward and resonates of this aspiration. He believes it is this distinct division of the material that has achieved that goal, and upon review, it does appear to meet the hype around it. It is unparalleled in scope and brings together the works of an international repertoire of experts in the field of English language teaching.

While available for direct purchase through Wiley, the encyclopedia's price of \$1658.75 may dissuade some buyers from purchasing it for private use. Its purchase price, however, does fall in line with the cost of other encyclopedias. Cost considerations aside, *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* can indeed replace an extensive collection of other materials from any library and become the go-to reference work with its sophisticated online access. With library shelf space going for a premium, the encyclopedia's eight volumes are space-efficient in comparison to other similar resources.

In sum, *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* is a must-have resource for researchers, educators, and students, especially in the uncertain times of Covid-19 where theory and practice are evolving within a technological acceleration and revolution. Given today's professional demands, many teachers and researchers are pressed for time and need solutions that connect practice with theory and provide current and valid research that is adaptable and relevant to their needs. *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* offers what the internet does not. No doubt, it is a comprehensive, organized, and timely resource, a resource that takes minimal knowledge or skill to navigate, for it offers a reliable, valid source in the time it takes to flip a page or press a button. This new dual access point unlocks reputable resources and valid information to provide meaningful reference to those willing to grow and benefit from international cutting-edge works, while saving time and guaranteeing quality. In hardcopy and digital, *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* turns classic into modern through its eight hardcover volumes and growing portfolio of new online entries updated biannually. At a

time of global uncertainty, what should be made certain, is there is a comprehensive guide that is expanding the readership of research, *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*, and it is time to take notice of it.

### References

- Cauz, J. (2013). *Encyclopaedia Britannica's president on killing off a 244-year-old Product*. Harvard Business Law. <https://hbr.org/2013/03/encyclopaedia-britannicas-president-on-killing-off-a-244-year-old-product>
- Collinson, R. L., & Preece, W. E. (2016). Encyclopaedia. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/encyclopaedia>
- Davis, P. M. (2011). Open access, readership, citations: A randomized controlled trial of scientific journal publishing. *The FASEB Journal*, 25(7), 2129-2134.
- Sadeghi, K. (2017). An Interview with John Lontas. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 5(2), 145-153.