

TIRF TODAY

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Promoting research and best practices to improve the use of English in the emerging global knowledge economy of the 21st century

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Results of TIRF's 2012 DDG Competition

TIRF's annual Doctoral Dissertation Grants (DDG) competition is now complete. This year's competition involved one of the largest applicant pools since TIRF started the DDG program eleven years ago.

Each year, the Foundation solicits proposals from doctoral candidates who are investigating topics that align with TIRF's research priorities. (For more information about TIRF's DDG program, [click here](#).) On the recommendation of TIRF's Research Advisory Committee, this year the Foundation will support a total of eight proposals.

We recognize the highest rated applicant each year by awarding the Russell N. Campbell DDG, which honors one of TIRF's founding Board members. We are pleased to announce that this year's Russell N. Campbell DDG awardee is **Ms. Patsy Vinogradov**, who is completing her PhD at the University of Minnesota.

The title of her study is "[Little Desks, Big Ideas: The Unlikely Meeting of Adult Educators in Kindergarten to Explore Early Literacy Instruction](#)." Patsy began her career teaching in Russia, and later she worked extensively with adult immigrants and refugees in Nebraska and Minnesota. She currently teaches at Hamline University. Her dissertation research explores literacy instruction for adult ESL learners who are new to alphabetic print literacy. It looks for valuable connections from early elementary classrooms to adult literacy courses.

Information about each of the other seven awardees and their studies is given below.

Lixia Cheng is studying the "[Effects of Pragmatic Task Features, English Proficiency, and Learning Setting on Chinese ESL/EFL Learners' Spoken Performance of Requests](#)." Ms. Cheng is a PhD candidate in Second Language Studies at Purdue University. Her research interests include language assessment, interlanguage pragmatics, and second language writing.

Tasha Darbes is a PhD candidate in TESOL at New York University. Her dissertation, "[Hard to Place: Multilingual Immigrant Youth in Community Colleges](#)," is a mixed-method study that explores how immigrant-origin students' experiences of testing and placement practices intersect with their bilingual proficiencies and identities.

Joyce Kling is a PhD candidate at the University of Copenhagen. Her project, "[Teacher Cognition: English-medium Instruction at LIFE](#)," examines teaching behavior in English-medium instruction courses as described by Danish professors of natural science. The project seeks to reveal underlying teacher cognitions about professional identity related to teaching through a foreign language in the multicultural, multilingual graduate classroom.

Derya Kulavuz-Onal is a doctoral candidate and a graduate teaching assistant in the Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Technology program, University of South Florida. Her primary research interest is in language teacher education and development. Her dissertation is entitled "[ESL/EFL Teachers' Learning to Teach with Technology through Participation in an Online Community of Practice: A Netnography of 'Webheads in Action'](#)." Her study explores the culture of learning and collaboration of an online community of practice of English language teachers.



Hyojung Lim is a PhD candidate in the Second Language Studies program at Michigan State University (MSU). Her study is entitled "[Investigating the Cognitive Validity of a L2 Reading Test: An Eye-tracking Study](#)." She worked as a testing office assistant at the English Language Center, and also taught undergraduate TESOL courses at MSU. Currently, she is assisting Dr. Paula Winke in conducting funded research on the IELTS listening component.

Briana Ronan is a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her dissertation is on "[Making Meaning across Modes: English Language Learners and their Academic Writing within a Digital Space](#)." It uses Multimodal Discourse Analysis as an analytical tool to examine how adolescent English language learners (ELLs) develop academic texts during an online writing intervention in content classrooms. By focusing on the student meaning-making process in a digital environment, the research seeks to improve teaching and assessment practices for ELLs through and with the use of technology.



Weiwei Yang is a doctoral student at Georgia State University. Her academic and professional interests include L2 literacy development and assessment, cognition and discourse, corpus linguistics, and L2 pedagogy and curriculum. Her dissertation is on "[The Role of Cognitive Complexity of Independent Writing Tasks in L2 Writing Quality and in Accuracy, Complexity, and Fluency of Language Production in L2 Writing](#)." It examines how cognitive complexity of writing tasks may affect L2 writing quality and language features of L2 writing, and how the language features may predict L2 writing quality differently for writing tasks of different cognitive complexity.



Congratulations to each of the 2012 TIRF DDG awardees! We would like to thank Cambridge University Press and Cambridge ESOL for their continued support of our DDG program. And to all of our readers who donated to the Russell N. Campbell fund, we are very grateful your contributions as well.



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Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF

Alelo Team Visits TIRF



Alelo means “tongue” or “language” in Hawaiian. Hawaii is a cross-roads for languages and cultures throughout the Pacific Rim, and thus is a metaphor for Alelo’s mission.

Alelo develops computer-based learning products focused on communication skills and cross cultural competencies needed for particular jobs and missions. The platform uses social simulations in which learners engage with human-looking avatars in meaningful communicative situations. (Some examples of social simulations can be found on YouTube by [clicking here.](#))

Alelo’s work is in line with TIRF’s current focus on promoting research and best practices to improve the use of English in the emerging global knowledge economy of the

Like-minded Organizations’ Grant & Awards Announcements



ETS Announces Grant Program

ETS is pleased to announce the inaugural *TOEFL*® English-language Researcher/Practitioner Grant program. The purpose of the program is to enable practitioners to become involved in ETS’s efforts to promote English language learning and to support education and professional development for English language teachers worldwide through ETS’s assessments and services.

The specific goal for the first year of the program is to compile data from diverse language learning contexts and to summarize these data in order to better understand the complexities of English language learning and teaching. Practitioners who are teaching in contexts that meet specified criteria are invited to apply. Successful applicants will receive funding of US \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The application deadline is November 1, 2012. For more information, please [click here](#). [Electronic applications](#) are encouraged and may be sent via email to TOEFL_awards@ets.org.

2012 Best Graduate Student Paper Award

The Editors of the *Canadian Modern Language Review* (CMLR) are inviting submissions for the Annual Award for the Best Paper by a Graduate Student. The competition is open to students who are currently registered or have graduated in the previous academic year.

Papers should present original, theoretically motivated research, with an analysis supported by a review of the relevant empirical literature. The topic of the paper must be related to second language teaching and learning.

Report from the Chair — TIRF Board Meeting Updates

This past month, the TIRF Board of Trustees met – in a manner of speaking – in White Plains, New York. That is some of the Trustees were in New York, but others participated from



TIRF’s Executive Assistant, Ryan Damerow, manages the technology at the Board meeting.

Australia, Japan, California, England, China, and Washington, DC. Thanks to the technological skills of Ryan Damerow, TIRF’s Executive Assistant, we were able to bring Board members into the meeting from around the world via Skype. For example, we had long-distance reports from Andrew Sugerman about Disney English in China; from Michael Carrier about British Council initiatives; and from Marti Estell about current US State Department activities in English language teaching.

I want to extend my profound thanks to my Board colleagues, who so graciously and consistently give their time, talent, and financial resources to make sure the Foundation continues to move forward. At the risk of using multiple negatives to express a positive, **not** only are Trustees **not** paid – they are **not** reimbursed for their own transportation or hotel costs to attend Board meetings, as we make every attempt to conserve Foundation resources for scholarships and other mission-specific expenses.



Trustees Andrew Sugerman, Michael Carrier, and Jun Liu join the TIRF Board Meeting via Skype.

21st century. The Alelo team is now focusing on cultural awareness and occupational communication skills for people with limited proficiency in English in corporate environments. An example task might be training hotel front-desk staff on how to deal with a dissatisfied guest, or using the right tone to address a customer in English.

In September, Dr. Paula Hidalgo, Alelo’s Vice President of Product Strategy and Marketing, and Dr. Lewis Johnson, CEO and co-founder of the company, met with TIRF’s President, Kathi Bailey, and TIRF’s Executive Assistant, Ryan Damerow, to discuss common research interests, needs assessment strategies, and critical sectors of the workforce. Afterwards Dr. Johnson commented, “We are happy to have had this opportunity to learn more about TIRF’s activities, and we look forward to further exchanges of research findings.”

Graduate course papers, theses, and dissertations may be source material for the paper submitted. A note from the professor of the relevant course or the thesis/dissertation supervisor supporting the submission and briefly outlining the place/nature of the paper within the student’s graduate studies program must also be included.

Papers should be submitted no later than November 30, 2012. The Best Paper will be published in Volume 69 of the *CMLR* and the author will receive a one-year subscription to the journal. To submit an article, [click here](#).

Christopher Brumfit PhD/EdD Thesis Award 2012

Sponsored by Cambridge University Press and promoted by *Language Teaching*, the aim of the Christopher Brumfit PhD/EdD Thesis Award 2012 is to recognize doctoral thesis research that makes a significant and original contribution to the field of second language acquisition and/or foreign/second language teaching and learning. The award for the competition is the value of £500 of Cambridge University Press books.

To be considered for the award, the candidate’s institution must have accepted the thesis for the PhD/EdD no more than two years before the date of the award application. The research must have been completed as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree or its equivalent at a university. Although the thesis under consideration must be in English, the research may be related to work concerning any second language. Finally, candidates should not have applied for the award on a previous occasion. The application deadline is November 30, 2012. For more information, please [click here](#). General inquiries may be directed to editorlanquageteaching@gmail.com.

Particular thanks are due to Trustee Joanne Dresner, who once again very kindly provided meeting space for the TIRF Board free of charge, and to her wonderful colleague, Martha Castro, who made so many arrangements on our behalf.

Lastly, I would like to add that Trustees David Nunan

and Lorraine de Matos have been reelected as Executive Committee members, Donna Christian as Secretary-Treasurer, and I myself as President. I am humbled to have this continued vote of confidence from my colleagues on the Board, and look forward to serving the Foundation over the coming year.



Trustees Richard Boyum (left) and Dick Tucker at the Board meeting

Kathi Bailey