

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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TIRF Facts & Figures: A Quiz About the Foundation

How much do you know about TIRF? Here is a multiple-choice quiz that will test your knowledge about the Foundation. In case you don't know some of the answers, we have provided links to [TIRF's website](#) so that you can learn more about the Foundation's activities as you take this quiz.

- Since its inception in 1998, how many people have served on [TIRF's Board of Trustees](#)?
A. 102 B. 50 C. 18 D. 68
- On average, approximately how many new individuals visit TIRF's website each month?
A. 500 B. 1,000 C. 1,500 D. 2,000
- TIRF's website provides
A. links to [language- and education-related organizations](#).
B. links to [journals in our field](#).
C. an [annotated bibliography](#) on research methods.
D. All of the above
- TIRF has published commissioned studies on
A. the impact of English and plurilingualism in global corporations.
B. English language training for the 21st century.
C. online English language teacher education.
D. All of the above
- TIRF's website provides access to ___ free downloadable [reference lists](#) on topics of current interest in applied linguistics and research on language teaching and learning.
A. 50 B. 75 C. 100 D. over 130

6. [TIRF's research priorities](#) include which of the following topics?

- A. language planning and policy
- B. language teacher education
- C. language assessment
- D. All of the above and more



7. On TIRF's website you can find ___ commissioned papers about [mobile-assisted language learning](#) (MALL), each of which is accompanied by comments from ___ invited discussants.

- A. 2, 4 B. 4, 6 C. 6, 2 D. 8, 2

8. TIRF first began supporting [Doctoral Dissertation Grants](#) (DDGs) in 2002. Since that time, how many DDGs have been funded?

- A. 29 B. 32 C. 38 D. 47

9. In the 2014 DDG competition, TIRF has received ___ applications as last year.

- A. only about half as many
- B. the same number of
- C. just over half as many
- D. over twice as many



10. [TIRF accepts donations](#)

- A. by credit cards online.
- B. by checks drawn on US banks.
- C. of any size.
- D. All of the above

The answers to these items can be found in Kathi Bailey's Chair's Report on page two of this newsletter. We hope you did well on this quiz, and that it has motivated you to learn more about TIRF!

Conference Opportunity at the University of Hawai'i

The 4th International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (ICLDC) will be held February 26 to March 1, 2015, at the Ala Moana Hotel in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The conference is hosted by the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and is supported in part by the US National Science Foundation.

The theme of the 4th ICLDC, "Enriching Theory, Practice, and Application," highlights the need to strengthen the links among language documentation (practice), a deep understanding of grammatical structures (theory), and methods for teaching endangered languages (application). At this conference, there will be a focus on

Reference Lists Updated

To help our stakeholders locate scholarly articles needed for their professional development, we are pleased to share several updated reference lists on our website. Additionally, a new list on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has been added to TIRF's website, as has one on gender, sexuality, and language. These resources are saved as Word documents and are free to download and share with colleagues around the world.

The following lists have been updated on the Foundation's website: Arabic learners of English, diary studies, ethnography, using corpora in language learning and teaching, code-switching, mentoring, heritage language

language documentation as the investigation of grammar and linguistic structure on the one hand, and the development of that investigation into sound pedagogy for endangered languages on the other.

The program for this three-and-a-half-day conference will feature two keynote talks, an integrated series of master classes on the documentation of linguistic structures, and a series of sponsored special sessions on pedagogy in language conservation.

For more information and links to past conferences, please [visit the conference website](#).

learners, listening assessment, validity and validation in language assessment, observation, schema theory, reading assessment, and writing assessment. [Click here](#) to visit TIRF's "References" web page.

The updates to these reference lists have been made possible, in part, by help from our supporters. In particular, we would like to thank these colleagues for their contributions: Netta Avineri, Robert Broom, Donna Christian, Martha Clark Cummings, and Peter De Costa.

If you would like to suggest a new reference list topic, or if you would like to add to any of our existing lists, please write to info@tirfonline.org. We would be very pleased to have your help in strengthening our resources!

TIRF Trustees at LTRC in Amsterdam

Editor's note: In this piece, Dr. Nick Saville shares information about LTRC held in Amsterdam earlier this month. Please note that Trustees travel at no expense to TIRF.

TIRF's mission is tightly focused on furthering research in the field of ELT to advance our understanding of some of the greatest challenges we face as educators, policy makers, language learners, and individuals with a stake in language education. Early in its history, the Foundation's Trustees developed a list of [research priorities](#) that were identified as being some of the most salient areas of research deserving of attention and financial resources.

Since 2009, TIRF has had a research priority on [language assessment](#). Around that same time, TIRF entered into a relationship with Cambridge English Language Assessment and Cambridge University Press to provide funding to support TIRF doctoral dissertations in language assessment.

With this focus on language assessment in mind, three TIRF Trustees — MaryAnn Christison, Gary Ockey, and Nick Saville — attended the 36th Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) in Amsterdam. The conference was hosted by the Department of Language and Communication of VU University Amsterdam and Pearson.

LTRC is the annual conference of [ILTA – The International Language Testing Association](#). As such, it is held in different locations around the world. In 2015, the conference will be [hosted in Toronto, Canada](#) and in 2016 in Palermo, Italy.

LTRC has also grown considerably in the past 20 years. About 280 delegates took part this year, coming together from over 30 countries to address the theme, *Towards a Universal Framework*. Pre-conference workshops included a two-day session on utilizing an "assessment use argument" to develop language tests and justify their use (coordinated by Lyle Bachman, Adrian Palmer, and Daniel Dixon). There were also sessions on translanguaging, meta-analysis, and test task development. The [very full program](#) included three plenaries, parallel paper presentations, symposia, posters, and work-in-progress sessions.

The first plenary was sponsored by the British Council – a long-standing TIRF supporter. The session was dedicated to Dr. John Trim, who passed away in 2013. Dr. Trim will be remembered for his extensive contributions to the field of applied linguistics in a career spanning nearly six decades. Above all, Dr. Trim's most notable contribution to the field throughout his career is his work with the Council of Europe. His efforts led to the development of the [Common European Framework of Reference \(CEFR\)](#) and related "toolkit" of instruments and materials.

Prof. Doug Biber (Northern Arizona University) was selected to give the Trim plenary. He focused on predictable patterns of linguistic variation across proficiency levels and textual task types – a topic which underlines the

growing importance of corpus linguistics in test development and validation.

The second plenary was delivered by the recipient of the 2014 Cambridge/ILTA Distinguished Achievement Award – Professor Cyril Weir from [CRELLA](#), University of Bedfordshire (England). Appropriately for an erstwhile historian, Prof. Weir chose a historical theme for his lecture – *Three Lessons from the Historiography of Language Testing*. Reflecting on his 35-year career in the language testing profession, Prof. Weir considered the past in language testing and discussed three important lessons we might learn from it. As he pointed out in his 'first lesson,' quoting Cicero: "Not to know what happened before one was born is always to be a child." He also referred to the recently published volume, *Examined Constructs (Studies in Language Testing, Volume 37)*, for which he was the lead author. This book provides an in-depth historical review covering 100 years of examining English and focusing on the four language skills – reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

The third plenary was the Samuel Messick Award. It was sponsored by [Educational Testing Service](#) and delivered by Dr. Denny Borsboom, professor of psychology at the University of Amsterdam. In addressing a challenging title – *Validity as the Realist Views It* – he outlined ways to advance our understanding of validity in psychological testing, considering the possibility that a measurement framework is simply inappropriate. This unconventional view sets out an alternative way of thinking about validity and is in opposition to the established paradigm based on the work of Messick, to whom the lecture was dedicated.

At the awards ceremony during the gala dinner at LTRC, MaryAnn Christison, Chair of TIRF's Research Advisory Committee, presented the 2013 TIRF Doctoral Dissertation Awards in Language Assessment to Mr. Nick Zhiwei Bi from the University of Sydney and Ms. Kimberly Woo from New York University. Ms. Woo was present to receive her award and plaque in person and was joined by her doctoral dissertation supervisor, Prof. Lorena Llosa. Mr. Bi was unable to be in attendance; he is supervised by Prof. Aek Phakiti.

TIRF congratulates Ms. Woo and Mr. Bi on their 2013 DDG awards in language assessment. We wish them well as they complete their dissertation research.



TIRF DDG Recipient, Ms. Kimberly Woo (front), with (left to right) Trustees Gary Ockey and MaryAnn Christison, Dr. Lorena Llosa (Woo's Doctoral Advisor), and Trustee Nick Saville

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Chair's Report — TIRF, All of the Above

How did you do on the quiz? The key is that all of the answers are "D" except for #1 (B) and #7 (C). In designing multiple-choice items, one normally tries to distribute the correct answers almost evenly across the choices, but we have not followed that principle here. Instead, "D" is the predominant correct answer because TIRF is endeavoring to do "all of the above" in so many cases!

This month, Ryan and I have been busy with the annual midyear appeal—the time when we reach out to those who benefit from TIRF's work and those who believe in its mission. We ask for financial support from individuals as well as organizations by sending a two-page report about TIRF's activities for the first half of the current year. If you have not received this

report and would like to read it, please [click here](#).

A very exciting feature of this year's midyear appeal is that the [TIRF Trustees](#) have committed to donating \$200 for every contribution of \$100 or more from the first 25 new donors. We are grateful to the many [individuals and organizations who have already donated to TIRF](#), but we hope to increase our donor base substantially by reaching out to people around the world. The Foundation supports initiatives that can help researchers, language teachers, teacher educators, program administrators, test developers, and language learners. If any of these labels fit you, would you please consider donating?

You can [make a contribution online](#) with a credit card. As an alternative,

you can send a check drawn on a US bank to the mailing address shown on the left column of this newsletter. We would be honored to add your name to our list of donors.

In closing, let me add a bonus item to our quiz: TIRF needs your financial support in order to

- increase the number of Doctoral Dissertations Grants.
- increase the size of the Doctoral Dissertations Grants.
- carry on the day-to-day operations of the Foundation.
- All of the above

Of course, the answer is D.

Kathi Bailey



**Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF**