

TIRF TODAY

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Results of the 2010 Sheikh Nahayan Fellowship Competition

TIRF is pleased to announce the winners of the 2010 competition for the Sheikh Nahayan Fellowships. These fellowships have been offered since 2008 for doctoral candidates completing their research on topics related to the teaching and learning of English in the Arab world.

TIRF offers these fellowships through a grant from His Highness, Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the United Arab Emirates. They provide substantial financial support to deserving young scholars researching a range of relevant research topics.

The three 2010 winners represent three different universities in three different countries:



**Melanie Mathilde
Elizabeth van
den Hoven**

Ms. Melanie Mathilde Elizabeth van den Hoven teaches at the Emirates College for Advanced Education. Her dissertation is entitled "The Use of English for Education in the Arab World: An Ethnographic Investigation of the Perceptions of Female Emirati Pre-service Teachers Towards the Use of English as a Medium of Instruction." She is studying at Durham University in the UK and her research supervisors are Dr. Prue Holmes and Dr. Sarah Aiston.

Mr. Mansoor Ali Al-Surmi is from Sana'a University in his native Yemen. He is investigating "Authentic ESL Spoken Materials: TV Shows vs. Day-to-day Conversation" at Northern Arizona University in the United States. His doctoral advisor is Dr. Randi Reppen.



Mansoor Ali Al-Surmi



**Enas Abdullah
Rajab Hammad**

Ms. Enas Abdullah Rajab Hammad is from Palestine. She is conducting a descriptive study of "Teaching and Learning English Reading in Gaza Prep Schools." Her research supervisors are Dr. Ali Madkour and Dr. Muhammad M. Abdel Latif at Cairo University in Giza, Egypt. (Dr. Abdel Latif was himself one of the 2008 Sheikh Nahayan Fellows.)

To learn more about the 2008 and 2009 recipients, and to read the 2010 recipients' abstracts, please visit <http://www.tirfonline.org/research-grants/sheikh-nahayan-doctoral-fellowships/recipients-and-findings/>.

Congratulations to each of these Sheikh Nahayan Fellows. We look forward to learning more about their research as the studies progress.

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The TIRF Network: A Gateway to Opportunity

Since completing her doctorate, Fiadhna Gardiner-Hyland, a 2008 Sheikh Nahayan Fellowship recipient, has been helping schools in Abu Dhabi gain accreditation, offering professional development for teachers and school managers, and providing teacher education in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Following a TIRF panel presentation at the 2010 TESOL Arabia Conference, Fiadhna received many offers for work. She writes, "I am so grateful to TIRF for giving me the platform to be noticed. I have just returned from a two-week training course in Libya, training Libyan faculty in methods of teaching in the college classroom (exactly my PhD focus!)....I had a fantastic time and learned so much. ...None of this would have happened without TIRF."

Fiadhna serves as the Chair of the Young Learners Special Interest Group of TESOL Arabia (please visit www.yl-sig.com to learn more). In addition, she has set up her own company, which focuses on curriculum reform, research, and teacher education.

Promoting research and effective practices in English language education for the global knowledge economy in the 21st century

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Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF

The Sheikh Nahayan Fellowships: A Retrospective Account by Yehia El-Ezabi



Dr. Yehia El-Ezabi

The Sheikh Nahayan Doctoral Fellowships represent a practical response to an increasingly felt need for a research-based approach to the challenge of upgrading standards and practices of English language teaching and learning in Arabic speaking countries and elsewhere. They are thus a concrete realization of TIRF's global mission.

Some twenty years ago, I was invited to take up the position of Dean of the School of Education, and of Vice Chancellor of the fledgling United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). In my first meeting with Sheikh Nahayan, who served as the UAEU Chancellor, I was charged with reorganizing the university, with special emphasis on upgrading English language requirements for prospective teachers of English in the country's school system, as well as for all students university-wide.

It was quite clear even then that Sheikh Nahayan had a deep conviction about the importance of English, both as a major subject in the curriculum and as a medium of instruction for other subjects. Indeed, his vision was to have most subjects taught in English, while maintaining the status of Arabic as a basic requirement as well as the language of instruction in a number of courses. That philosophy reflected his strongly held view that the best investment in the future is in education, and that English has become a crucial component of that investment globally. He also greatly valued the role of research in educational decision making, and language policy remained a priority item on his agenda.

So when Sheikh Nahayan was briefed on the mission of TIRF and its efforts to disseminate research findings and to create a network of researchers concerned with English language teaching and learning, he readily agreed to support the Foundation by funding The Sheikh Nahayan Doctoral Fellowships. Nine carefully selected scholars have been awarded the Fellowship over the past three years, and already one of the first-year awardees is a supervisor of the doctoral research project of one of this year's fellowship recipients. Thus, the establishment of a research network and a new generation of English language education scholars in the Arab World is well underway.

Editor's note: TIRF Trustee Emeritus Dr. Yehia El-Ezabi has been involved in the development of the Sheikh Nahayan Fellowships since their inception. It was he – along with our former Board colleague, Dr. Ali Al Sharahn – who encouraged the Sheikh to contribute funds to TIRF for this important initiative.

Report from the Chair — Investing in Education

As 2010 draws to a close, I have many reasons to count my blessings. Among them, I am pleased to note that TIRF is on stable footing, financially, although the budget remains very limited. We have an active Board composed of committed professionals representing eight countries. This past year the Foundation was able to fund six new Doctoral Dissertation Grant recipients and three new Sheikh Nahayan Fellows. TIRF publications appeared in *BizEd*, in *English Career Magazine*, on the website of the British Council, and on the Foundation's website. In addition, we converted our old website to a more user-friendly system, with easier navigation and more resources for visitors. All in all, it has been a good year for TIRF.

As you can see, the December 2010 issue of this newsletter focuses on the Sheikh Nahayan Fellowships. Since 2008, nine young scholars have benefited from this program. Two of the 2008 Fellows and two of the

2009 Fellows have already successfully completed their doctoral studies, with the support of this generous funding.

In a speech in 2005, Sheikh Nahayan said, "Investment in education delivers definitely the biggest return on investment....The future of the country will depend on the level of education we provide to our people. In a knowledge-based economy, research is important." The members of TIRF's Board of Trustees agree with Sheikh Nahayan in this view: As the world seems to grow smaller, through enhanced communication and transportation, and as life seems to go faster, through advances in technology, we can clearly see that access to information, to skill- and knowledge-building, are essential elements in the development of human capital.

With this report, in my role as the Chairman of the Board, I am asking you to consider your own investment in English language education. In looking back at 2010, I see that we have accom-

plished many of our goals, but we want to extend the reach of the Foundation further. We want to influence policy makers, legislators, the corporate sector, and the general public, as well as professional educators, with the findings of research. Doing so involves conducting and publishing research, as well as supporting doctoral candidates, and all of these activities hinge upon the availability of resources.

Many of our readers have already made a 2010 contribution to TIRF. Can you please help too? I would be happy to respond to any questions or comments you may have about the work of TIRF, so that you can feel fully informed as you make a donation, either online at <http://www.tirfonline.org/donate/> or by way of a check drawn on a US bank. A year from now, I want to be able to tell you, with great confidence, "All in all, it's been a GREAT year for TIRF!"

Kathleen Bailey