

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

### TIRF Trustees

James Alatis  
Kathleen M. Bailey  
Michael Carrier  
Donna Christian  
Mary Ann Christison  
Lorraine de Matos  
Joanne Dresner  
Yehia El-Ezabi  
Dennis Hogan  
Jun Liu  
Joe Lo Bianco  
David Nunan  
Ana Silvia Ramirez  
G. Richard Tucker  
Kensaku Yoshida

### In this issue:

Interview with 2008 DDG Recipient, Dr. Polina Vinogradova	1
TIRF Receives Major Contribution from ETS	2
"Putting Research Into Practice" in Doha, Qatar by Dudley Reynolds	2
TIRF Presentation at National Teachers' Conference in Guatemala	2
Report from the Chair—A Challenge and the "Attitude of Gratitude"	2



Dr. Polina Vinogradova

### Interview with 2008 DDG Recipient, Dr. Polina Vinogradova

**Editor's note:** Dr. Polina Vinogradova was awarded a TIRF Doctoral Dissertation Grant in 2008.

**TIRF:** Dr. Vinogradova, in 2008, you were the recipient of TIRF's Russell N. Campbell Award, which is given to the most outstanding applicant each year. The topic of your study was "Digital storytelling in ESL instruction: Identity negotiation through a pedagogy of multiliteracies." What were the main findings of your study for us in a few sentences?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** In my study, I looked at how a pedagogy of multiliteracies can be introduced to the ESL curriculum using digital stories. I also explored the ways ESL learners negotiate their identities through multi-modal ways. The findings revealed the presence of situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and to a lesser extent transformed practice – four principles of a pedagogy of multiliteracies – in the process of digital story production. ESL learners who participated in this study, enthusiastically brought their interests, knowledge, native languages, and life outside of the classroom into the pedagogical process.

At the same time, some students were quite critical of overt instruction, as they initially desired a more traditional approach to English language learning which included repetition, memorization, and grammar-focused exercises. But gradually they immersed themselves in collaborative learning and started to critically evaluate their own progress as language learners. In digital stories that the students produced, they negotiated multilayered and fluid identities and positioned themselves as storytellers and producers, children, parents, siblings, world travelers, people who serve their countries, and cultural experts. But none of the participants articulated as central an ESL student identity, which was an important finding.

**TIRF:** What did you learn about doing research in the process of completing your dissertation?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** Perhaps the most important thing that I learned was that it is extremely difficult to be a teacher and classroom researcher at the same time. I collected my first set of data while teaching a class, and it was quite a challenge to be an effective teacher while collecting data. I was often worried that the research part was taking away from my teaching, and teaching was taking away from my being a careful and thoughtful researcher. I collected my second set of data in a class taught by a colleague, and was able to truly enjoy classroom research without the pressure of being a teacher in that class.

**TIRF:** You have recently taken the position of Director of the TESOL Program in the Department of Language and Foreign Studies at the American University in Washington, D.C. What does your work involve?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** I am responsible for the overall management of the TESOL Program and for program and curriculum development. Our program offers a number of TESOL-related events open to ESL professionals in the

Washington DC metro area, and I develop and organize those with great help from our Graduate Assistants. I also work with TESOL faculty members, with TESOL students as their academic advisor, and with prospective students and alumni. Working with graduate students is exciting and rewarding.

**TIRF:** What plans do you have for future research and how did your dissertation influence them?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** I would love to continue working with digital stories. Some American University faculty have been using digital stories in their classes where the students have been discussing and responding to digital stories produced by ESL students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. The response has been amazing, and I plan to explore how the use of digital stories as instructional texts and writing prompts influences the development of academic writing skills. Also, prior to starting in my position at American University, I worked with staff of the Center for Applied Linguistics on the use of technology and digital stories in Heritage Language Education in particular, and will continue this work.

**TIRF:** What did receiving the TIRF Doctoral Dissertation Grant mean to you?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** It was such a terrific validation of my work! It was an affirmation that what I was doing was interesting and valuable for the field of TESOL. I think as researchers we often wonder if our work is relevant and important, and I have always hoped that in addition to enjoying the process of learning and exploration, I could meaningfully contribute to the field. Receiving the grant indicated to me that I was on the right path.

Also, the grant was a very important support for me as I was able to attend a number of conferences, present my work, and get very valuable feedback. In addition, I was able to purchase necessary software without which it would have been very difficult to work with my data.

**TIRF:** What advice would you give people who are just beginning their doctoral research?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** I think it is important to stay focused and believe in yourself. It is important to know why you are doing this research and how it will influence your future. I also recommend going to conferences and talking to Applied Linguistics and TESOL scholars. As young researchers, we are often hesitant to approach people whose books and papers we read in class or for our research. But many are interested in talking to doctoral students, and can offer great perspectives and advice. Pursuing a doctorate is not easy and it takes a lot of determination, but it is also a great source of joy.

**TIRF:** What would you say to someone who is considering donating to TIRF?

**Dr. Vinogradova:** Your donation can really make a difference for a doctoral student, especially now when the funding for research is so limited. You actually will contribute to important cutting-edge research in TESOL, and a student might be able to finish her/his dissertation sooner. Receiving a DDG from TIRF is a great emotional support and an honor that can inspire someone to move forward. Thank you for your generosity!

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

**Mailing Address:**

177 Webster St., # 220  
Monterey, CA 93940 USA

**Email Address:**

[info@tirfonline.org](mailto:info@tirfonline.org)

**Visit TIRF online at**

[www.tirfonline.org](http://www.tirfonline.org)

**For back issues of**

**TIRF Today, please visit**

<http://www.tirfonline.org/about-us/newsletters/>



**Kathleen Bailey,  
Chair of TIRF**

## TIRF Receives Major Contribution from ETS



TIRF is pleased to announce that Educational Testing Service (ETS) has made a substantial donation to support the Foundation. Their recent \$25,000 contribution will be used to support a wide range of programmatic activities.

"We are particularly grateful to receive this wonderful unrestricted gift at this time," said Kathi Bailey,

## "Putting Research into Practice" in Doha, Qatar by Dudley Reynolds



**Dudley Reynolds**

The TESOL International Association hosted a conference in Qatar titled "Putting Research into Practice" on 1–3 October. The conference focused on three themes: understanding the "good language learner," bridging the gap between goals and results, and facilitating and supporting ongoing professional development. More than 400 people from 30 countries participated in the three days of workshops, plenary sessions, panels, and presentations of peer-reviewed research papers, reports, and posters.

Preconference workshops were held on modeling and assessing writing, led by Alister Cumming (University of Toronto); teaching and learning vocabulary, led by Norbert Schmitt (University of Nottingham); English for specific purposes, led by Brian Paltridge (University of Sydney); teaching young learners, led by Annamaria Pinter (University of Warwick); teaching and learning L2 reading, led by Bill Grabe (Northern Arizona University); and a sociocultural approach to languages and literacies, led by Maggie Hawkins (University of Wisconsin–Madison).

The conference opened with a panel discussion on the implications of research for practice in the areas of second language writing, vocabulary teaching, and working with young learners. In their discussion, Alister Cumming, Norbert Schmitt, and Annamaria Pinter focused on how research reveals the complexities of learning a language and in turn often challenges assumptions about what students need to learn or how

TIRF's President. "ETS has been making major gifts to TIRF since 2003. Their support enables us to carry out numerous initiatives."

These sentiments were echoed by Donna Christian, TIRF's Treasurer. She noted, "This generous donation from ETS helps move TIRF forward, providing needed resources to pursue our mission. The ongoing support from ETS is especially welcome and appreciated."

they should learn.

The second day of the conference featured plenary talks by Kassim Shaaban (American University of Beirut) titled "The Good Language Learner: What We Have Learned from Research about Attitude and Motivation," and by Martin Bygate (University of Lancaster) titled "Bridging the Gap Between Tasks and Learning: Patterns in the Language People Use on Communication Tasks and Why It Might Matter."

The final day of the conference opened with a plenary talk by Deena Boraie (American University of Cairo) titled "Professional Development Matters: Bridging Research and Practice Introduction." In her talk Boraie related the findings of research studies on quality professional development to a new system being implemented in Egypt for supporting and encouraging the professional development of teachers in the K–12 sector. The conference closed with a panel discussion on the implications that practice holds for research with respect to English for specific purposes (ESP), reading instruction, and the development of languages and literacies. Each panelist viewed the question from a different perspective. Brian Paltridge outlined a number of different topics that are addressed in ESP classes but which have had very little actual research done on them. Bill Grabe, on the other hand, talked about the need for researchers to think about questions that matter to reading teachers, and Maggie Hawkins talked about the need for researchers to collaborate actively with teachers in both identifying and addressing questions. Further information on the conference program and links to presenters slides are available on the [conference website](#).

## TIRF Presentation at National Teachers' Conference in Guatemala



From left to right, Kathi Bailey, Ryan Damerow, Ana Silvia Ramirez, & MaryAnn Christison

TIRF gained visibility in Guatemala this month when three TIRF Board members and TIRF's Administrative Assistant, Ryan Damerow, participated in the National Conference for Teachers of English in Guatemala City. Trustees Mary

Ann Christison and Kathi Bailey gave "spotlight presentations." In addition, Trustee Ana Sylvia Ramirez,

Damerow, and Bailey gave a talk entitled "What is this Thing Called TIRF?"

The presentation was based in part on TIRF's publication, *The Impact of English and Plurilingualism in Global Corporations*. More than 125 conference participants attended the session. Ms. Ramirez, who is also the CEO of the Instituto Guatemalteco Americano (IGA), led a lively discussion about English skills and the job market in Guatemala.

IGA gave TIRF bookmarks for the 1,100 conference attendees. TIRF Board and staff member attended the conference at no expense to the Foundation.

## Report from the Chair— A Challenge and the "Attitude of Gratitude"

We have just celebrated the Thanksgiving holiday in the US. This year, I have many things to be thankful for, and I would like to tell you about a few of them.

First, I am grateful to my colleagues on the TIRF Board of Trustees, who give (quite literally) their time and their resources to conduct the business of the Foundation. Once more, they are offering a matching challenge: For every new donor who contributes \$100 or more to TIRF by December 31,

2011, Board members will provide an additional \$100 donation.

Second, I appreciate the contact with TIRF grant recipients, who have updated us on their research, and particularly those who have participated in interviews for this newsletter.

Third, I am very thankful for those colleagues who have contributed reference lists and annotations to our bibliography on research methods.

Finally, I am grateful to the donors who have so generously supported our initiatives. Without our donors' contributions, the Foundation would be unable to carry out its important work. To each of you, let me express my profound "attitude of gratitude" (Ryan, 1999).

*Kathi Bailey*

**Reference:** Ryan, M. J. (1999). *Attitudes of gratitude*. York Beach, ME: Conari Press.