

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

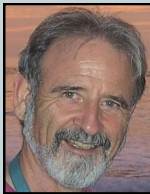
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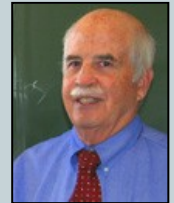
You are Invited! TIRF at TESOL 2012 in Philadelphia



Anthony Fitzpatrick

You are cordially invited to attend the TIRF presentation at the TESOL Convention in Philadelphia. The main presenter will be Tony Fitzpatrick, one of the authors of TIRF's new monograph, *English at Work: An Analysis of Case Reports of English Language Training for the 21st-Century Workforce*. He will summarize the literature review, explain the research design, and report on the findings of the study. TIRF Trustee Dick Tucker will serve as the discussant.

The presentation will be held in room 203-A of the Convention Center from 10:00 to 11:45 AM on Thursday, March 29, 2012. We are planning to offer a coffee and tea service before the presentation begins, as an opportunity for attendees to network with TIRF's Board members, some of our grant recipients, and other professionals who are concerned about the effective uses of English in business, industry, and the professions. We hope to see you there!



Dick Tucker

TIRF's Reference List Offerings Grow

There are now over [eighty reference lists](#) available on TIRF's website, including two new reference lists – one on curriculum and one on collocations. In addition, several other lists have been updated over the past month. We would like to thank Dr. Fred Davidson for his support in this endeavor.

TIRF welcomes contributions from anyone who would like to add to the existing reference lists or

contribute an entirely new list. Word documents in current APA format should be submitted to info@tirfonline.org. Contributions will be acknowledged both on the website and by a formal letter of thanks. Reference lists are particularly needed on literacy, on code-switching, on criterion-referenced assessment, and on concordancing in L2 teaching and research.

Research Organizations: Spotlight on RELC

Editor's note: *In the interest of sharing resources with teachers, teacher educators, and applied linguists around the world, TIRF will occasionally provide information about organizations concerned with language research.*



The Regional Language Centre (RELC) in Singapore is a well recognized language teacher education center set up by the Southeast Asian Ministers of

Education Organization (SEAMEO). It is one of twenty such specialist centers serving countries in the region (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam).

According to its website, the Centre is "dedicated to the development of language teacher education in the region and the promotion of international cooperation among language professionals." This mission emanates from the philosophy of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization that "language education will lead to an improved quality of life for people in the region and to greater international cooperation."

SEAMEO RELC engages in many activities related to and in support of research. These activities include its annual International Seminar, publications like the *RELC Journal*, and library services.

SEAMEO RELC manages a specialized library with a collection of no fewer than 50,000 books, reference materials, journals, and other periodicals related to applied linguistics and language teaching. It supports SEAMEO RELC programs in training, research and development, materials production, publications, and seminars. It is frequently visited by regional and international scholars as it has a comprehensive repository of Southeast Asian English language teaching research.

An international language seminar is organized and held every year at SEAMEO RELC. Each year, the seminar brings together about five hundred subject experts and classroom practitioners to discuss specific areas of language teaching and learning. This year, SEAMEO RELC will hold its 47th International Seminar from April 16-18, 2012. The seminar theme of "Multiliteracies in Language Education" aims at (1) exploring the theoretical bases of multiliteracies and their implications for language education and workplace language skills, and (2) sharing research on pedagogy in multiliteracies in the region and elsewhere.

In addition to training, the Centre facilitates research in language learning by providing fellowships to individuals from the region whose research proposals relate to language education. The Centre offers at least two fellowships a year to qualified scholars who are nationals of SEAMEO member countries.

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**Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF**

Join Us in Celebrating “Discover Languages Month!”

Editor’s note: The following piece has been adapted from The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language’s (ACTFL) website, discoverlanguages.org. It has been slightly modified to fit the context and scope of TIRF Today.



February marks the seventh annual celebration of “Discover Languages Month,” an initiative developed by The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). According to ACTFL’s website, Discover Languages Month

was created to “raise public awareness about the cognitive, academic, cultural and economic benefits language learning provides.”

ACTFL has created a website filled with ideas and classroom activities, information, and research studies,

ACTFL Publishes Revised Proficiency Guidelines

Editor’s note: The following text has been adapted from the general preface of The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language’s (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines. It has been modified to fit the context and scope of TIRF Today.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are descriptions of what individuals can do with language in terms of speaking, writing, listening, and reading in real-world situations in a spontaneous and non-rehearsed context. For each skill, these guidelines identify five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. The major levels (Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice) are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. The levels of the ACTFL Guidelines describe the continuum of proficiency from that of the highly articulate, well-educated language user to a level of little or no functional ability.

Report from the Chair—The Year of the Dragon



This past month, people around the world celebrated the Lunar New Year, which marks the actual beginning of the Year of the Dragon. From what I understand, in Chinese tradition, the dragon is a symbol of good fortune and great power, unlike the terrible village-eating creature of European literature and folklore. However, the dragon is considered to be unpredictable, since its coloration is changeable. And because it is so large, we cannot see both its head and its tail at the same time. In this sense, the image of the dragon is indeed an apt way to think about a new year: We cannot know at the beginning what the end will bring.

One year ago in the January, 2011 issue of *TIRF Today*, I shared with you my New Year’s resolutions: I pledged to increase the number of our individual donors by 50% and to find five new corporate donors who would support TIRF’s fundraising efforts. We have accom-

plished the first goal and made a start on the second. Furthermore, for each new individual donor who contributed to TIRF in our first mid-year appeal and our year-end appeal, the Trustees contributed \$100 more. I hope to be able to continue this matching challenge for new donors in the years to come.

Our [new corporate donor in 2011](#) was Anaheim University, whose generous gift is supporting TIRF’s next commissioned research paper, which concerns online language teacher education programs. Over the next several months, I hope to contact other organizations whose missions are language-oriented, as well as those whose work is affected by the need for English language abilities in their workforce, in hopes that they can support TIRF’s initiatives.

We are about to publish [TIRF’s second commissioned study, *English at Work: An Analysis of Case Reports of English Language Training for the 21st-Century Workforce*](#). The authors, Tony Fitzpatrick and Robert O’Dowd, have provided an extensive review of literature that relates to 21st-century skills and

as well as step-by-step guidelines to help teachers, students, parents, and supporters communicate about the benefits of language learning. The campaign also seeks to provide a unifying effort among all language professionals to help them work collaboratively, promote language education, and identify resources to meet the needs of the constituent groups of language professionals.

“We want to help teachers, parents and students spread the word to business leaders, decision-makers, and political leaders at the local, state, and national levels,” said ACTFL Director of Education Marty Abbott. “The research is clear and measurable: Learning languages boosts cognitive ability and improves academic performance across all subject areas, including English,” Abbott said.

For more information on “Discover Languages Month,” please [click here](#).

First published in 1986, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines were initially an adaptation for the academic community of the U.S. Government’s Inter-agency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptions. The third edition of the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines includes the first revisions of Listening and Reading since their original publication in 1986, and a second revision of the ACTFL Speaking and Writing Guidelines, which were revised to reflect real-world assessment needs in 1999 and 2001, respectively.

The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are utilized for the evaluation of functional language ability. The Guidelines are intended to be used for global assessment in academic and workplace settings. However, the Guidelines do have instructional implications. [The ACTFL rating scales](#) are free to download.

have analyzed case reports submitted by twenty English language training providers. We hope to use the resulting monograph to reach out to leaders in business, industry, and the professions, because it is imperative that the findings of applied linguistics research influence decisions made outside of educational spheres. Please contact me if you know of anyone who might like to receive the full report or the executive summary of the research.

One more thought: In Chinese tradition the dragon is seen as powerful partly because it possesses features of other animals—the teeth of a tiger, the scales of a fish, the body of a snake, and the wings and talons of an eagle. As language researchers and people concerned with research on language teaching and learning, we need to be as multifaceted as the dragon. We must be able to talk to people in other walks of life, to learn of their needs and insights, and to share with them our research findings. I hope you will support TIRF in this outreach effort. Happy new year!

Kathleen Bailey