TIRF Commissions Research on Mobile-assisted Language Learning

English language education stakeholders around the world continue to turn to mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) to meet the demands for learning English. To this end, TIRF has commissioned five papers to explore the current state of MALL and to investigate which directions the field is heading. We are pleased to announce that these papers are now available on our website. Details are provided below.

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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Editor’s note: In this piece, Dr. Nick Saville (left), Director of Research and Validation for Cambridge English, shares details about the 100th anniversary of the Cambridge English exams.

TIRF President Kathi Bailey was one of the invited speakers at this landmark conference in September, marking the 100th anniversary of the Cambridge English exams. Kathi’s presentation on “English at Work: Learning and Using English on the Job” was part of a wide-ranging program designed to reflect the educational values and commitment to research that have characterized Cambridge English ever since the first Proficiency exam was taken by three candidates in 1913. Kathi was invited to speak at the event both in her own right as an engaging and thought-provoking speaker, and to mark the close relationship between Cambridge and TIRF. Both organizations share a commitment to using research to improve the outcomes of teaching, learning, and assessment. TIRF President Kathi Bailey and Executive Vice President Mike Milanovic welcomed an invited audience of over 300 to the event, which closed with a dinner at Cambridge’s iconic King’s College, with an after-dinner speech by Professor David Crystal.

The day was chaired by Ron White, and there were 14 scholars who were invited to speak on one aspect of policy in their specialist areas, reviewing current practices and reflecting on the prospects for the future. The following areas were covered: learning and teaching English; technology, including automated assessment; and the use of English in society. Neil Jones and I from Cambridge gave a keynote talk focusing on Learning Oriented Assessment. Other speakers included Dr. David Graddol, who will be the James E. Alatis Plenary Speaker at TESOL 2014, and Professor Tim McNamara, who is on the organizing committee for the 2014 AILA Conference in Brisbane, Australia. The conference was an opportunity to launch David’s latest book entitled Profiling English in China – The Pearl River Delta.

The whole event can be viewed online at www.policyreview.tv/conference/920-cambridge-english-centenary.co.

From left to right, TIRF Trustees Lorraine de Matos, Kathleen Bailey, and Mike Milanovic.

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Editor’s note: In this piece, TIRF donor and supporter, Dr. Andy Curtis (left), Professor, Graduate School of Education, Anaheim University, California, shares his experiences with using TIRF’s resources in his professional endeavors.

As a TIRF donor and as someone who has contributed to the TIRF resources, I am now in the position of being able to make use of those resources. For example, earlier this year, in May 2013, TIRF published an important report titled A Case for Online English Language Teacher Education. The report, written by Denise Murray (TESOL Past President, 1996-1997), represents one of the most up-to-date accounts of one of the newest and fastest-growing areas in our field. In the Foreword to the report, Kathi Bailey notes that the topic of online language teacher education is “central to our ongoing discussions about English in the 21st-century workforce. … As technological developments exert more and more influence on education in general, and teacher training in particular, it behooves us to understand the impact of those developments” (p.4).

I have read that complete report, and made use of it several times. For example, my most recent biweekly blog for the TESOL International Association, about teaching and learning online, is based on that report. In addition, two articles that I have written will be appearing soon — one in the TESOL Teacher Education Interest Section Newsletter and one in the IATEFL Teacher Training and Education Newsletter. They also make use of the TIRF report by Denise. In addition, at the recent California TESOL annual conference in San Diego, Kathi and I gave a joint presentation about creating classroom communities of practice in online environments, which also referred to that TIRF report — and as an added bonus, Denise was in the audience!

These four recent examples show how our donations and contributions to TIRF over the years are resulting in clear and concrete benefits to our own communities of practice, as researchers, writers, and presenters.