

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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Research Spotlight: ETS's Language Learning & Assessment Offerings



Editor's note: In this piece, Xiaoming Xi (pictured left), Senior Director of the Center for English Language Learning and Assessment at ETS, shares information about the role of the Center and ETS's resources in English language learning and assessment.

Educational Testing Service

(ETS), founded in 1947, is the largest nonprofit educational research organization in the world. The ETS **mission** is to support equity and quality in education for people by providing assessments, learning tools, and services built on our rigorous research. This mission drives everything we do at ETS, including reinvesting a substantial portion of the revenue we generate from our testing programs back in research. This allows us to do exciting foundational research to help advance the field.

Since the 1970s, we have been involved with studies in the area of English language learning and assessment, starting with assessments and services for English learners in other countries and more recently for English learners in the United States. The goal of such investigations is to design assessments in ways that lead to meaningful scores that allow for valid judgments about test-takers' English skills and research-based learning tools that help learners to improve their English skills. While some of these projects have been associated with our **TOEFL®** and **TOEIC®** families of assessments, we also have a heritage of foundational **research** in both theories and practices of how language is learned and assessed.

ETS also operates its English-Language Learning and Assessments Research Center. Our work in this area has been significantly enhanced and supported by research being done in other **areas**, including cognitive and learning sciences, natural language processing and speech technologies, and advanced psychometrics. Our research in English language learning and assessment aims to serve learners in the United States and worldwide by (1) adding to the body of scientific knowledge about effective and appropriate language assessment; (2)

developing new, research-based assessments and learning tools; (3) improving existing assessments; and (4) designing assessments that aim to improve the quality of instruction for English learners

Our rigorously peer-reviewed research plays an important role in supporting the quality and usefulness of our assessments. Behind each English-language testing program, there is an ongoing research program, to make sure that there is evidence to back up the claims we make. For example, ongoing **TOEFL® research** has resulted in 172 peer-reviewed reports, two books and 68 journal articles and book chapters.

The **ReSEARCHER database**,



contains citations and links to publications by ETS staff or external authors using ETS data, including freely downloadable research reports on **TOEIC®**, **TOEFL Junior®**, and **TOEFL® Primary™**, and the reports in the **TOEFL® Monograph Series**, **TOEFL® Research Report Series**, **TOEFL® Technical Report Series** and the **ETS Research Report Series**. We also support external researchers, academics, and graduate students conducting studies in foreign or second language research, teaching, or assessment through a wide variety of **TOEFL® Grants and Awards**.

Our commitment to the ETS mission is also evidenced by a variety of resources we offer to students, teachers, and institutions to improve the use of our assessments and consequently inform and positively influence learning and teaching. Some of these resources include **test preparation materials**, as well as **English skill-building tools**, such as the **Criterion® Online Writing Evaluation service** and the **English Language Centers** developed for young learners of English. We also offer English language teachers professional development opportunities through our **Propell® workshops**. Our **Global Institute** provides educators, policymakers, and testing professionals with training and practical advice through seminars, workshops, and courses. Our recently redesigned **website** allows for easy access to all these resources.

TIRF Trustee David Nunan Receives Routledge Award



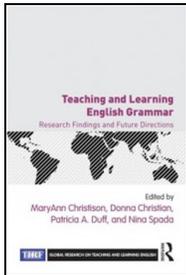
We are pleased to share that **TIRF Trustee David Nunan** was selected as the Routledge Education Author of the Month in May. The award is designed to recognize authors' contributions to education.

According to the announcement made by Routledge about Dr. Nunan's award, he has been a teacher, researcher, consultant, and author for 45 years. He has held academic posts in Australia, the

United Kingdom, the United States, Thailand, Singapore, and Hong Kong, as well as visiting posts in many other countries. Aside from being a TIRF Trustee, he is also Director, UNSW Australia Global and the UNSW Hong Kong Foundation Board. In the non-academic sphere, he is a Director, and former Chair of the Hong Kong International Literary Festival. At present, David is President Emeritus of Anaheim University, Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics at the University of Hong Kong, and Professor in Education at UNSW Sydney.

Please join us in congratulating David!

TIRF



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**Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF**

TESOL's Call for Research Proposals

The TESOL International Association is seeking applications for its call for research proposals. The following text has been taken from TESOL's website to help share information about how our readers can get involved.

"The [TESOL International Association Research Agenda](#) seeks to promote spirited inquiry and systematic investigation that will contribute to the knowledge base of the TESOL field. As described in the agenda, TESOL research may focus on individual, community, or societal issues and should be responsive to current theoretical perspectives and ecological conditions driving change in language learning and teaching. TESOL research should be governed by ethical consideration for research participants and society as a whole and seek to inform and improve both policy and practice.

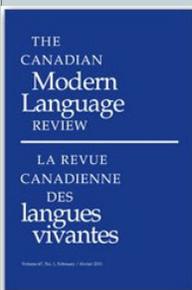
The [TESOL Research Agenda](#) was developed to delineate TESOL's research direction and bring together researchers and practitioners with the aim of improving English language teaching and learning. In support of this work, the [Research Standing Committee](#) (RSC) has been charged with soliciting research proposals that encourage practitioner-researcher collaboration."

Awards are made in the amount of up to US \$2,500. Proposals must be submitted by July 1, 2015. For more information about evaluation criteria, the application process, and much more, please [click here](#).



Canadian Modern Language Review — Call for Papers Special Issue 2016

We are happy to share the following announcement from the *Canadian Modern Language Review*, regarding the journal's call for submissions for a special issue on the topic of translingual second- and foreign-language classrooms.



The *Canadian Modern Language Review* (CMLR) invites manuscripts to be considered for the special issue "Showcasing the Translingual SL/FL Classroom: Strategies, Practices, and Beliefs" to appear in 2016. In this issue, empirical research is solicited as well as practice-oriented articles on translingual methods, particularly in Canadian classrooms or those with

special relevance to Canadian second, foreign, heritage, aboriginal and ancestral language teaching. The special issue targets studies in any of the following settings: language minority students in structured immersion and/or transitional settings as well as language minority and/or majority students

in immersion, maintenance, two-way/dual language, additive, and mainstream bilingual settings.

CMLR welcomes a wide range of methodological approaches, including auto-ethnography, survey research, mixed-methods designs, case studies, discourse analysis, and conversation analysis. In addition to classroom practices, research related to the status and role of students' native languages in the SL/FL/HL/Aboriginal and ancestral language classroom including school policies, teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and classroom practices, and students' attitudes towards their own learning are welcome. The journal strongly encourages contributions for the "Focus on the Classroom" section, in which research-based approaches to pedagogy and methodology are presented and elaborated.

The submission deadline is June 30, 2015. Proposals are welcome in either English or French. All submissions are subject to the CMLR peer-review process. Please visit the proposal guidelines at the following link for information on manuscript length, the mandate of the journal, and other aspects of submission: www.utpjournals.com/cmlr.

Chair's Report — The Bittersweetness of Summer

Some readers may recall that last December, part of TIRF's year-end appeal included a TIRF adaptation of a poem by Clement Clarke Moore, which we retitled as "['Twas the Last of November](#)." It was followed a few days later by a choral rendition of "[The Twelve Days of Christmas](#)," for which my team and I had written new lyrics, urging people to give to TIRF. These creative ideas were suggested by Ryan Damerow, TIRF's Executive Assistant. As approaches to fundraising, a poem and a song seemed a bit unusual to me, but Ryan was right: We received letters and emails from donors about these efforts. One person said he had not planned to give to TIRF last year, but could not resist after hearing the song. Others wrote that although they had already sent their 2014 contribution, they were motivated to give more after reading the poem.

After seeing these outcomes, my reluctance turned to enthusiasm, and as a result, we will be launching TIRF's 2015 mid-year

appeal with a medley of three short songs about summer. I know it is not summer in the Southern Hemisphere, but as school ends and the weather gets warmer in the Northern Hemisphere, I am compelled to think about summer.

The stereotype of summertime is a happy one: families on vacation, people enjoying picnics, days at the beach, or hiking in the mountains. But these are also sad days in some ways. For many teachers, this time of year means that students and colleagues we have worked with and even loved are now moving on. Summer is a time of many partings.

I have been blessed this past year to work with some very talented and helpful graduate assistants. [Robert Broom](#), who has worked on many of the TIRF reference lists and Doctoral Dissertation Grant reports, has gone on to an internship at West Point. [Anita Krishnan](#), who developed the reference list on creativity, is going to Harvard to pursue further graduate studies. I am thankful

that Tim Marquette will work with me for another year. In August, although Ryan will still be working for TIRF, he will be moving to Michigan. For these reasons, I have assembled my team once more to produce a musical summer appeal, in hopes that many of you will be moved to make a donation to TIRF. Though it may be a bittersweet time of the year, my wish is our forthcoming song is nothing but a sweet melody, and that it will make you smile.

Kathi Bailey



Your Friendly Neighborhood Songsters
Left to Right: Kathi Bailey, Robert Broom, Tim Marquette, Ryan Damerow, and Anita Krishnan