

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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Season's Greetings from TIRF's Board of Trustees

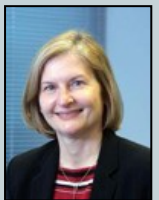
Editor's note: TIRF's volunteer Board members wish all of our readers a splendid holiday season and a happy New Year! For more information about TIRF's trustees, past and present, please visit <http://www.tirfonline.org/about-us/trustees/>.



Mary Ann Christison: This time of year is always a time for me to reflect on the things that are important to me and on what I have tried to accomplish in the past year. One of those things is my work for TIRF. I have the pleasure of serving as Chair of the Research Advisory Committee, so my work for TIRF is related to overseeing the adjudication of the Doctoral Dissertation Grants (DDG) program. In this capacity, I have the opportunity to interact with young scholars from all over the world and to learn about their professional goals and ambitions, and their plans for future research for our profession. My conversations with them always renew my commitment to TIRF's work and remind me of how fortunate we are to work in English language education with so many opportunities for making connections around the world. May the year ahead bring good things to all of us and especially to TIRF and the work we all do to further English language education. May 2012 be a year full of peace and prosperity.



Joe Lo Bianco: Normally we are baking hot at this time of year in Australia and cutting the sleeves off our Santa suits, pretending the sand is really snow and the crashing waves sound like shepherds herding their flock. An antipodean dilemma, but it comes with no diminishment to my affection to TIRF, admiration of its work, and commitment to its goals. May 2012 be a very productive year.



Donna Christian: Thanks to our supporters, 2011 was a very successful year for TIRF. We were able to provide dissertation grants for deserving doctoral students, commission reviews of knowledge and practice related to English in the workforce, and continue to make resources and information about English language education widely available. We look forward to continuing this important work in the year ahead, and wish everyone a new year that brings joy and happiness.



Ken Yoshida: 2011 has been a year to remember for all of us here in Japan. The March 11th earthquake and everything that has followed in its aftermath have brought about drastic changes in the way the Japanese think about energy, the environment, and the way we live – both domestically and internationally. Personally, I chaired the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Sports, and Technology Committee (people from both the academic and business communities) to reform foreign language education in Japan. We have produced a report which we hope will have an impact on Japan's English language education for the next five years. I hope that 2012 will be the start of a new era in foreign language education for all of us.



David Nunan: This time of year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the year that has passed and look forward to the year to come. 2011 has been a year of considerable growth for TIRF. Our finances are stable, we continue to provide support to our constituents, we have brought some projects to fruition, and have embarked on others, such as the online teacher education initiative, which will keep us busy in 2012.

On a personal front, during the festive season, I look forward to spending time in Hong Kong with my daughters, one traveling from the States and one from the U.K.



Joanne Dresner: Thank you for helping TIRF make a difference in the realm of English language teaching and learning. We are working hard to ensure that the research we commission and disseminate helps decision makers establish and improve their language programs wherever they are in the world. Happy New Year.



G. Richard Tucker: I had the good fortune to spend much past year as the Interim Dean of Carnegie Mellon Qatar, which provided me with the opportunity to see firsthand the need for, and the contributions of, TIRF-supported research on the teaching of English in the Arab world. Through the generosity of the U.A.E.'s Minister of Higher Education, Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, TIRF has to date been able to support nine doctoral dissertation fellowships. The need to improve the quality of English language teaching throughout the Arab world remains high on the agenda of many ministries throughout the region and TIRF looks forward to contributing to this important mission.



Mike Milanovic: As we approach the end of one year and the beginning of another, my thoughts turn to all that has been achieved and to plans for the future. TIRF has already accomplished much in helping us to understand the importance of language in the world today, particularly English. By supporting research and commissioning studies that contribute to our understanding, TIRF has a leading role in all aspects of language education: learning, teaching, and research. We at Cambridge University look forward to continuing to support the work of TIRF in 2012 and would like to wish everyone a prosperous and productive new year!



Lorraine de Matos: As another year comes to a close, we can look back at 2011 and appreciate TIRF's contribution to many aspects of English language education throughout the world. I am especially excited about next year, when Brazil will host an international event on behalf of TIRF, dealing with the issue of "English in the Workforce," which is a perfect fit for our

preparation for the World Cup in 2014, followed two years later by the Olympics. To all of our readers, I wish you Feliz Ano Novo.

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**Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF**

2012 Doctoral Dissertation Grants Competition Now Open

TIRF is delighted to announce the call for proposals for its 2012 Doctoral Dissertation Grants (DDG) competition. Interested individuals can view the call on TIRF's website by [clicking here](#). For general information on TIRF's DDG program, please [click here](#).

To carry out this year's competition, TIRF's Research Advisory Committee is actively seeking applications from qualified doctoral candidates – doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy and have had their doctoral research approved by their faculty committee. Proposals must

be related to [TIRF's research priorities](#). DDG awards are funded up to US \$5,000 and are open to students in doctoral programs from all over the world. There are no restrictions on citizenship or residency. If you know of doctoral students who may be interested in applying, please share this information with them. The deadline for the receipt of DDG proposals is May 14, 2012. Notification will be made by August 31, 2012. For further information, please write to info@tirfonline.org.

Jack Kent Cooke Dissertation Fellowship Award

Editor's note: TIRF is pleased to share the announcement below from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. The text has been slightly modified to fit the context of TIRF's newsletter.

The Jack Kent Cooke Dissertation Fellowship Award supports advanced doctoral students who are completing dissertations that further the understanding of the educational pathways and experiences of high-achieving, low-income students. Eligible applicants must have completed all pre-dissertation requirements.

Dissertation fellowships are intended to support the doctoral student for work done after the student's dissertation proposal has been successfully defended. Applications are encouraged from a variety of disciplines such as, but not limited to, education, sociology, and psychometrics.

The fellowship is a one-time award of up to \$25,000,

which may be used for a period of not less than nine months and up to eighteen months, beginning in May 2012 when the award decisions are announced. Four fellowships will be awarded this year, and there are plans to increase this number in the coming years.

The Cooke Dissertation Fellowship must be used to support a graduate student while writing his or her dissertation. How the funds are expended depends on each recipient's individual need. This fellowship does not provide funding for distance learning programs or for degrees heavily dependent on distance learning components. The fellowship does not cover overhead.

The deadline for submission is February 3, 2012 (11:59 EST). For more information, please visit the fellowship's [FAQs page](#) or write to fellows@jkcf.org.

A US State Department View: Global English Needs in 2012



Larry Corwin

Editor's note: Larry Corwin is the US State Department's liaison to the TIRF Board of Trustees. Mr. Corwin is the director of English Language Programs at the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Exchanges.

Through the global teaching and teacher training programs that our office runs, I have spent considerable time in 2011 in discussions with educators, government officials, businessmen, teachers, and parents from around the world, from Indonesia to Russia to Brazil, about the need for more and better English instruction. The concern is

not just about better preparation for teachers, but also about ensuring that more members of the population have the skills necessary for public interaction, especially in the workplace. These concerns always bring home to me the importance of research we are encouraging through TIRF, and the focus on issues that will make an impact. From my counterparts, I receive many requests for information on issues such as English in the workplace, plurilingualism, and online English language teacher education – TIRF's current research foci. May 2012 bring more success to TIRF and to all of my friends and colleagues who work so hard to improve English language education.

Report from the Chair—Three Studies of English Skills and Workforce Opportunities

TIRF's current focus on promoting research and best practices to improve the use of English in the emerging global knowledge economy of the 21st century has led me to do my homework. Recently I've been reading three reports about research conducted in vastly different circumstances – one local, one national, and one international – which connect English skills with employment opportunities. One study investigated the needs of Burmese refugees in Oakland, California. Another investigated English language training programs in manufacturing firms in the US, and the third examined the benefits of having English skills in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Rwanda.

The 2011 study, [From Crisis to Community Development: Needs and Assets of Oakland's Refugees from Burma](#), was published by San Francisco State University. One finding of the research is that Burmese refugees represent many different linguistic groups, so even where Burmese interpreters are available, their services may not be useful, as many refugees from Burma do not speak Burmese. Years of political turmoil have disrupted the education of many of these refugees (63% have not graduated from high school), so several are pre-literate. Over 60% are jobless. The Burmese

participants in the study ranked English classes as their greatest need, over interpretation services, health care, government benefits, job training, and case management. Unfortunately, recent budget cuts have eliminated many adult ESL classes in the area.

A 2006 report, [Improving Workplace Opportunities for Limited English-Speaking Workers](#), was jointly published by the National Association of Manufacturers and Jobs for the Future for the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education. Four features were identified which characterized "exemplary ESL training practices" for the workplace: Practices must (1) benefit both employers and employees; (2) be sustainable; (3) be scalable (i.e., be expandable as needs increase); and (4) be replicable (p. 4). The study includes four cases of manufacturing companies that offered ESL training (in Oregon, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Nebraska). Benefits to workers and to employers were identified, including in some cases higher salaries, greater job security, and more opportunities for advancement when workers' English skills improved.

The third report, entitled [The Benefits of English Language for Individuals and Societies: Quantitative Indicators from Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda,](#)

[Bangladesh and Pakistan](#), was published by the British Council in 2010. For each country, the report discusses the connection between foreign investment and English skills in the national workforce, the influence of English in the country, and the role of English in the employment market. In Rwanda, representatives of twelve companies were interviewed, while the database involved representatives of thirty companies in each of the other four countries. The study found that employees with good English skills earn up to 30% more than their coworkers, and they were also more likely to advance more quickly within their organizations. Major differences in educational opportunities were identified as influencing English skills development – differences based in part on family income (i.e., the ability to afford high quality education) and in part on rural versus urban access to education.

These studies underscore the importance of English language skills development for the workforce. I hope you will join with me in supporting TIRF's efforts to pursue this important topic through conducting research, disseminating research results, and influencing policy makers in 2012.

Kathi Bailey