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.

Ken Beatty, Professor, Anaheim University

Mobile learning has extended opportunities for making teaching and learning available beyond the traditional classroom. Associated technologies, software programs, and internet access have enfranchised many students who previously had little access to quality teaching. However, a paradigm shift has occurred in which learners are turning to new mobile learning opportunities to supplant traditional teaching as virtual extensions of earlier self-help books, phrase books, and audio-based language learning programs. Audio translation apps, augmented reality, and just-in-time learning approaches are providing alternatives to people who have neither access nor time to learn a language. This paper examines the theoretical underpinnings of a range of technologies and applications, contrasting them with the traditional classroom and imagining the future of mobile language teaching and learning and the impact it will have on policymakers, teachers, employers, and learners.

Nicky Hockly, Director of Pedagogy, The Consultants-E

This paper takes as its starting point Laurillard's (2012) assertion that classroom practitioners need to become designers of effective learning experiences. It describes a small-scale classroom-based action research project carried out with two different levels of international EFL students studying in the UK over a two-week period. Through the experience of implementing mobile-based communicative classroom tasks with these learners, six parameters for the effective design and sequencing of these tasks became apparent: (1) hardware, (2) mobility, (3) technological complexity, (4) linguistic/communicative competence, (5) type of MALL, and (6) educational /learning context.

This paper describes the study and proposes these six parameters as keys to designing effective mobile-based tasks for the communicative language classroom. It is hoped that these parameters may be applicable to other fields in education. Finally, areas of concern within the study are explored, suggestions are made for future classroom-based research, and the importance of teacher training is highlighted.

Agnes Kukulska-Hulme, Professor of Learning Technology and Communication at The Open University

Ubiquitous access to mobile phones and other portable devices means that language learning increasingly straddles classroom-based learning and learning outside the classroom, in virtual spaces and out in the world. We know from studies of emergent learner-led practices that foreign language study can be enriched through easy access to resources selected to suit individual interests or needs. Yet learners' choices seem largely determined by what they happen to come across, rather than knowledge about which language skills are best improved through mobile learning. Existing mobile applications often fail to exploit connections between life and learning. This paper suggests which language skills can be enhanced through mobile learning and how learner-technology interaction supports that development, particularly opportunities for learners to extend or practice their communication with others. The paper also suggests that new skills may be required in relation to the next generation of wearable devices and increasingly instrumented, technology-rich surroundings where use of mobile technology integrates with other tools, resources, and social networks that continue to challenge traditional knowledge and skills.

Glenn Stockwell (pictured on top), Professor, Waseda University
Philip Hubbard (pictured on bottom), Senior Lecturer and Director of English for Foreign Students, Stanford University Language Center

The steadily increasing access to sophisticated but affordable portable technologies over the past several years has brought with it a body of research into using these technologies for learning in both formal and informal contexts. It is not surprising, then, that language teachers have also adopted mobile technologies into their individual teaching and learning contexts. This paper first examines recent studies from the mobile-assisted language learning literature, exploring the issues that emerge from this body of research through a framework distinguishing physical, pedagogical, and psycho-social dimensions. Recognizing not only the contributions but also the limitations of existing MALL literature, the paper then identifies a number of findings from the closely allied fields of mobile learning (ML) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) that can inform both research and practice in MALL. Drawing from all three sources (MALL, ML, and CALL), the paper proposes ten general principles to guide teachers, learners, administrators, employers, and other stakeholders in the challenge of effectively integrating mobile devices and tasks into language learning environments. The paper concludes with a case study showing how each of the principles described have been applied in an actual mobile language learning context.

John Traxler, Professor of Mobile Learning and Learning Lab Director, University of Wolverhampton

This paper explores the past decade of mobile learning projects, policies, research, and conceptualizing and asks about its relevance to the future as it might apply to language learning. The paper provides a very broad categorization of mobile learning in order to identify pedagogic possibilities for language learning. The changing nature and authority of language and learning are discussed as well. There are nevertheless practical lessons to be learnt.

We would like to extend our gratitude to these six authors. Also, we wish to invite our readers to comment on these papers by visiting our website. In the months ahead, we expect to release several more investigations on this topic, so please join us in sharing your reactions and your beliefs about MALL.

TIRF Receives Gift from Disney Worldwide Services, Inc.

We are very pleased to announce that TIRF has received a gift of $10,000 from Disney Worldwide Services, Inc. This generous donation will allow the Foundation to continue to pursue its mission of addressing English language education worldwide.

TIRF Trustee Andrew Sugerman, Executive Vice President for Disney Publishing, had the following to say about the gift to the Foundation: "Disney Publishing's mission is to inspire children to create their world through the magic of stories. I believe that this inspiration comes from supporting organizations, such as TIRF, which advance our thinking on how chil-dren learn and develop – allowing them to realize their full potential in a world that spins faster and faster. English Language Learning and early childhood development are areas where we continue to seek innovative yet effective ways to engage a global population while building a solid foundation for lifelong learning."

TIRF Trustee and Treasurer, Donna Christian, had the following to say about Disney's gift to TIRF: "The TIRF Board is very appreciative of the generous contribution from Disney, as it provides essential support for our efforts to fund and disseminate research on key topics in English language education."

We are especially grateful for this wonderful donation during this challenging time for philanthropy around the world.

The Cambridge English Centenary Conference

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 Trustees Lorraine de Matos and Michael Carrier also attended the event.

Cambridge English CEO and TIRF Trustee Michael 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, Michael Carrier, Kathi Bailey, and Mike Milanovic

Donors' Contributions Deliver Useful TIRF Resources

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.

Chair's Report — Trustees on the Move

Editor's note: Trustees travel at no cost to the Foundation.

Members of the TIRF Board of Trustees travel all over the world in their own work, and when they go, they try to represent TIRF. We are all excited about our volunteer work with the Foundation and want to tell people about it as often as we can.

For example, TIRF Trustees Mike Milanovic, Michael Carrier, Lorraine de Matos, and I were able to talk with several people about TIRF at the recent Cambridge English Centenary Conference. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I was honored to be able to present Mike with a plaque recognizing the contributions of Cambridge English to language assessment and research.

At the recent CATESOL (California and Nevada TESOL) Conference in San Diego, Trustees David Nunan and Mary-Ann Christison co-presented a plenary with Denise Murray, during which they introduced TIRF to the audience. Denise and MaryAnn also presented the findings from the TIRF study of online language teacher education, which was supported by a gift from Anaheim University (mentioned in the piece above).

We hope that you will also share your enthusiasm for TIRF with people in your network. We want to make sure that everyone who could benefit from TIRF's resources knows that they are available.

Kathi Bailey

TIRF Trustees at CATESOL Conference, left to right, MaryAnn Christison, Kathi Bailey, & David Nunan