

# 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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### TIRF Event in São Paulo, Brazil

Earlier this month in São Paulo, Brazil, thanks to Trustee Lorraine de Matos and her wonderful team at the Cultura Inglesa there, we hosted our second “TIRF Event” in Brazil. (The first was in 2005, and you can [read about it on TIRF’s website](#).) The event was a panel discussion entitled “Different Contexts and Challenges for English in the Workforce.” The two-hour program drew an audience of more than 200 local business leaders and language teaching professionals.

There were five Trustees representing TIRF in São Paulo: David Nunan, Jun Liu, Michael Carrier, Kathi Bailey, and Lorraine de Matos. Lorraine was the master of ceremonies for the event and added a number of interesting points based on her perspective of working in São Paulo. Kathi gave a brief orientation to TIRF, followed by David talking about the development of approaches to investigating and teaching English in the workforce. Michael then shared some of the findings from TIRF’s recent publication on English language training for the workforce. Then Jun talked about English language learning and teaching in China.



Rodrigo Alberto Correia da Silva

A number of interesting and influential local speakers were also invited to address the audience. The British Ambassador to Brazil, Alan Charlton, led off with his view of the importance of English in Brazil. He was followed by Herman Jacobus Cornelis Voorwald, the State Secretary of Education for São Paulo, who shared some data about English language developments in the public schools of São Paulo. The following speaker was Rodolfo Fücher of Microsoft, Brazil. His talk was entitled “How to Survive and Succeed: Market Conditions and Perspectives on the English Skills Needed for the Knowledge Economy.” Next, Rodrigo Alberto Correia da Silva of the law firm of

Britcham SP, talked about “Brazil’s Growth and Globalization: The Challenge of Building the Necessary English-speaking Workforce.” Data from a Euromonitor research project was presented by Marcel Motta, who talked about “The Importance of English for Employability for Brazilian Professionals.” Michael Connelly, a British Council representative working in India, talked about the importance of English learning there.

After the various presentations, Lorraine read a statement about Professor Antonieta Celani, a former TIRF trustee whom the Board recently elected as a Trustee Emerita. Due to a recent injury, Professor Celani was not able to attend the event, but she had sent a statement, which was read on her behalf by Mr. Antonio Mendes, the President of the Board of Directors of the Cultura Inglesas. (See page 2 for details.)



Antonio Mendes and Kathi Bailey

Prior to the event, the press person at the Cultural Inglesa conducted a Q&A with Kathi Bailey. The comments from the interview were translated into Portuguese and released to the local press in São Paulo. The result was a full-page spread in the *Brazil Econômico*. The top two-thirds of the page was about globalization and English in the workforce, and the bottom third of the page was the interview with Kathi. Since the initial publication mentioned above, another story has appeared in the press. [Click here](#) for that text in Portuguese. (Google translate can be utilized to read the article in English.)

**(Editor’s note: The Foundation incurred no expense for the Trustees’ travel and activities in Brazil. We remain dedicated to using our donors’ invaluable gifts in ways that they will most effectively help us carry out our mission.)**



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**Kathleen Bailey,**  
Chair of TIRF

## Brazilian Professor Honored by TIRF



**Antonieta Celani**

We are pleased to announce that Maria Antonieta Alba Celani, Professor Emerita at the Catholic University of São Paulo, has been elected as a Trustee Emerita of TIRF. It is only the third time in the history of the Foundation that this honor has been bestowed on a former Trustee.

Professor Celani teaches in the Graduate Program in Applied Linguistics, which she helped to establish in 1970. She currently directs an in-service education program for state school teachers of English. Her research interests are in the area of teacher education, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and foreign language learning. She directed

the National Brazilian ESP Project (1980-1989), and served on a committee of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (1984-1988). She is co-author of *National Parameters for Foreign Language Teaching*, which was published by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. Professor Celani received the Officer of the Order of the British Empire award in 1978.

Professor Celani's recognition is based on her national and international stature as an educator. TIRF acknowledges her inspirational and passionate commitment to improving the quality of English language teaching in Brazil and throughout the world, as well as her dedicated service to the Foundation as a former member of the Board.

## A Brazilian Perspective on the TIRF Event in São Paulo



**Lorraine de Matos**

(**Editor's note:** In this piece, Trustee Lorraine de Matos shares her view on the TIRF event in Brazil.)

*"English continues as Brazil's Achilles heel"*

*"Brazil still loses business opportunities due to insufficient command of English."*

*"Globalization demands a lingua franca for business relations"*

These titles, chosen from the national press coverage of the recent TIRF event held in São Paulo on July 11<sup>th</sup>, and sponsored by the Cultura Inglesa-São Paulo, illustrate the urgency of a call for action for solutions to Brazil's chronic English language deficit.

"Different Contexts and Challenges for English in the Workforce" was the theme of the panel discussion, and the objective was to address how different organizations from the private and public sector deal with challenges and solutions related to the increasing need of English for the workforce in Brazil. Models from the experience of China and India, results of [the most recent study commissioned by TIRF](#), and testi-

monials from Brazilian businessmen, consultants, and authorities in public education provoked a lively debate in the auditorium and the press.

The challenge was to get business and academia, the scholars and the number crunchers, to join forces in the pursuit of solutions for real corporate needs, through mutual respect for one another's capabilities, and the complementary and logical fit between the academic and business objectives of this event. The success, measured by the full house with a varied audience profile from business, academia, and the public sector, was guaranteed by the relevance of TIRF's research. The timing was perfect for future events, two years before the 2014 World Cup and four before the Olympic Games, though perhaps late for immediate business needs. But, given the interest we all witnessed that day, we are a bit more optimistic about action happening in the near future.

The scene was set, some alternative paths offered. The impact of this wake-up call will be notable. The headline that we now want to see in the press is: *"Brazil enchants visitors to the World Cup with a warm welcome... in English"*.

## ETS Announces 2012 Jacqueline Ross TOEFL Dissertation Award

The TOEFL Program at ETS is pleased to announce that it will now begin accepting applications for the Jacqueline Ross TOEFL Dissertation Award to be presented in 2012. The deadline for receipt of applications is September 1, 2012.

This award's purpose is to recognize doctoral dissertation research that makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge about second or foreign

language tests and testing and/or the use and development of such tests and testing. A total of US \$2,500 will be given to the winner, as well as round-trip economy airfare, expenses, and three-nights hotel accommodations at the Language Testing Research Colloquium, where the award is presented.

For more information about the award, please [click here](#). You may also write to [TOEFL\\_awards@ets.org](mailto:TOEFL_awards@ets.org).

## Report from the Chair — Getting Past "Preaching to the Choir"

The saying "Preaching to the choir," according to the website [The Phrase Finder](#), first appeared in about 1973. It refers to the futility of a minister's message reaching only those people who are already attending church.

This phrase is often used in meetings of the TIRF Board members, when we are trying to figure out how we can engage people outside the ELT profession in conversations about English language teaching and learning. If you will forgive me for stretching the image a bit, this month in Brazil, Trustee Lorraine De Matos and her colleagues at the beautiful Cultura Inglesa in São Paulo opened the doors of the metaphorical church and welcomed a wide range of

professionals with an interest in the teaching and learning of English. Members of the audience at the TIRF event included guests from publishing houses, pharmaceutical companies, law firms, technology companies, advertising agencies, and more.

As Brazil prepares for the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016, many people there are recognizing the importance of English as a lingua franca for dealing with the influx of visitors expected at these two important international sporting events. As an illustration, please see the [TIRF case report](#) written by Cuca Righini and Vinicius Nobre. It describes their work with Brazilian nurses and healthcare workers who are im-

proving their English skills in order to help international visitors.

I would like to extend my profound thanks to Lorraine and her team for hosting this important event for the Foundation. We look forward to future opportunities to meet with anyone interested in learning more about research on English language teaching and learning. Although I am not a minister (heaven forbid!), I can imagine many benefits for the Foundation and for our stakeholders if we can continue to communicate beyond our usual professional comfort zones.

*Kathi Bailey*