

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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What's Happening with Mobile-Assisted Language Learning?

In 2013, TIRF commissioned [six papers about Mobile-Assisted Language Learning \(MALL\)](#). They are posted on TIRF's website along with invited discussions of each paper by two practitioners who use MALL in some way. Given TIRF's focus on improving the use of English in the global knowledge economy of the 21st century, we continue to follow MALL developments around the world.

For example, [Kerri Hannan](#), the US State Department Observer to TIRF's Board of Trustees, reports on an American English Mobile App from the Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The free American English mobile app enables users to build English language skills anytime, anywhere using their mobile phones. The app uses data compression, which allows teachers and learners to access the resources while using very little data. Kerri notes, "Already many State Department teaching and learning resources are available on the app, including audiobooks, e-books, music, and our Trace Word Soup game. There are also over 6,000 books available via our partner WorldReader, translation and social media tools, and news sources. The new Department of State platform, ShareAmerica, recently highlighted the app and our efforts to broaden our reach globally." Last month, the app was used in 130 countries, with India and Ethiopia as the top users. Fifty issues of *English Teaching Forum* will soon be loaded onto the app, giving users access to hundreds of articles, lesson plans, and activity ideas. Also under development is a promotion video that will show teachers how to download the app and how to use it in their classrooms.

At a major binational center in Lima, Peru, MALL is being explored as a promising vehicle for learning English outside of the classroom. According to Leo Mercado, the Academic Manager of the Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano (ICPNA), ICPNA has launched its own online learning platforms for self-directed learning: *V-Learning* and *V-Learning Kids*. The vast majority of the content for these platforms was created using HTML5, which allows for greater web interactivity and functionality. Students can take advantage of what is often considered "idle time" and practice their English whenever they like. Notable features currently in use and others expected soon include voice recognition and recording, animations, embedded videos, audio for listening practice, engaging activities, games, virtual 3D environments, and others. ICPNA plans to conduct research to determine learners' expectations and preferences regarding the use of MALL applications, and then move on to gauge the extent to which they can actually contribute to English language development over time.

Last week at the CATESOL Conference in Northern California, [TIRF hosted a panel presentation about MALL](#). Phil Hubbard, a co-author of one of the commissioned papers, talked about learner training in mobile-assisted language learning. TIRF Trustee [Mahesh Ram](#) discussed the uses of MALL in workplace language learning. In addition, three practicing teachers who use MALL related their work to one or more of TIRF's commissioned papers. Karen Hamilton, a teacher at Glendale Community College, shared her ideas for using Socrative for both interactive and traditional quizzes, for writing sentences "on the board," to enable students to vote for their favorite

answer among those generated by their classmates, and to create "exit slips" as students complete a lesson. Rebecca Kersnar, who teaches at California State University Monterey Bay, explained how her students create visuals with QR (Quick Response) codes. They also use Google Docs for collaborative writing, and utilize WordPress for student-developed electronic portfolios and for conducting mobile peer reviews. Jeff Mattison, a teacher at Cerritos High School, shared his ideas about using Socrative, Google Voice, QR Codes, and Poll Everywhere with his ESL students.

John Knagg, Senior Adviser for English at the British Council, notes that the Council believes mobile devices have huge potential both for language learning and for teacher development. He said, "[Our free apps](#) are available for kids and adults, covering general grammar and vocabulary skills as well as specialist areas such as the IELTS examination, English and football, and even English for taxi drivers. Our teachers are looking for new ways to use mobile learning, and are keen to share their ideas." He cited [Emma Segev's blog](#). He added that another excellent example of mobile learning in a low-resourc teacher development context is in the [Bangladesh English in Action Programme](#).



Deena Boraie

In Egypt, Deena Boraie, Dean of the School of Continuing Education at the American University in Cairo and President of TESOL International Association, was asked by the university president to provide [English language lessons for the university's security guards](#). However, the guards' long working hours and changing shifts made it impossible for them to attend regular classes. The solution? Mobile-assisted language learning. Deena commented, "People with long working hours ... face the challenge of not having sufficient time for traditional face-to-face classroom language courses or even online courses and they need greater flexibility in their learning contexts."

As we can see from all these examples, there is no shortage of ways MALL is being used in classrooms around the globe. Yet there continues to be very little known about best practices for using MALL, what the landscape may look like in the future when it comes to technology in the classroom, or how we as a field can efficiently assess whether platforms are delivering the hoped-for benefits. Perhaps more than anything else we know one thing: Mobile-assisted language learning is here to stay and it is up to organizations like TIRF to help shape and document the ways MALL can be utilized effectively.



TIRF MALL Panel at 2014 CATESOL Convention: From left to right (back) Phil Hubbard, Kathi Bailey, Mahesh Ram, and from left to right (front) Rebecca Kersnar, Jeff Mattison, and Karen Hamilton

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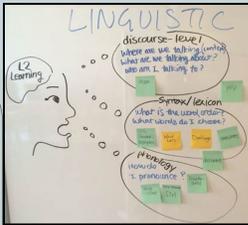
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Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF

Teacher Training and Capitalizing on MALL

Editor's note: Thor Sawin, a professor of applied linguistics at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, recently offered a seminar on MALL. Here he reports on that experience.



The main goal of my MALL seminar was to equip language teachers to make intelligent and critical decisions about if, when, and how to incorporate MALL applications and functionalities into their course, unit, and lesson designs. As a way of introducing the topic, I used the TIRF commissioned papers about MALL as the basis of a jigsaw reading task for my graduate students (MA candidates in TESOL and Teaching Foreign Languages).

Rather than replacing or rendering teachers obsolete, the rise of MALL makes effective teachers more necessary than ever. Such teachers are needed to train learners to use MALL, and also to design, engineer, curate, troubleshoot, and assess the bewildering and ever-evolving range of MALL applications. The teacher trainees in my seminar explored how the four main functions of MALL – content delivery, tutorial, creation, and communication – can be integrated into a cohesive whole with traditional instructional methods. Teachers need to understand that

Conference on e-Learning and Innovative Pedagogies



Keeping in alignment with this month's newsletter theme of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) content, we are pleased to share some information about a MALL-related conference scheduled to take place next year. The 8th International Conference on e-Learning and Innovative Pedagogies will be held on November 2-3, 2015 at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The theme for the conference is "The Future of Education: Advanced Computing, Ubiquitous Learning, and the Knowledge Economy."

According to the conference website, the digital revolution represents a sea change in the nature of learning and education. Information and communication technologies are transforming academic research and scholarship –

Chair's Report — A Trick-or-Treat TIRF Challenge

Although the first official day of autumn in the northern hemisphere is in September, it is the month of October that traditionally marks the beginning of a new season for many people living in fall-like climates. In many places around the world, October is also a month in which children look forward to dressing in disguises and going door-to-door in search of treats loaded with sugar.

There are a variety of ways to celebrate Halloween. Whether it is *souling* in Great Britain or Ireland, *guising* in Scotland, *calaveritaing* (the "ing" added by me) in Mexico and Puerto Rico, many children look forward to this time of year. Trick-or-treating, as the activity is known in the United States, is fun for all ages. It seems in more recent times that there has been a lack of emphasis on the "tricks" in "trick-or-treat," with so many people focused on only the treats. I would like to offer a bit of a trick-or-treat challenge to our readers – and, yes, there is a treat involved amongst the trickery, so keep reading.

We have created a five-item quiz about TIRF and placed it on [our Facebook page](#). The challenge to you is to

each new MALL application brought into a language learning ecosystem has the power to not only increase learner motivation and lesson effectiveness, but also to potentially bore learners, to conflict with other applications, and to increase the costs in time, money, and frustration for students.

I am very excited about the [teacher resource website](#) we are currently building as a class. This website contains not only an extensive list of academic references, but annotated reviews of a wide range of mobile applications, and rubrics for helping teachers make informed decisions regarding the theoretical assumptions, pedagogical effectiveness, and implementability of any given app. Since the range of particular applications changes by the day, this rubric function is what is most sorely needed – a set of questions that will help teachers assess the impact of any new application they may find.

Overall, this project has been extremely rewarding, and the teacher trainees have been eager to add this set of skills to their lesson and curriculum design toolboxes. I am confident that a solid foundation in the pros and cons of mobile learning will be increasingly non-optional in the job markets of the near future. The most exciting aspect of the class to me has been observing these teacher trainees' passion for discovering technologies which learners are already bringing to class, to add depth, authenticity, and communicative need to routine language lessons.

introducing an entirely new platform for knowledge and learning. The e-Learning conference investigates the uses of technologies in learning, including devices with sophisticated computing and networking capacities which are now pervasively part of our everyday lives. The conference explores the possibilities of new forms of technology-mediated learning devices not only in the classroom, but in a wider range of places and times than was conventionally the case for education.

It is not too late to submit a proposal to present at this conference, but time is running out. Proposals are due November 4, 2014. Conference organizers are inviting [a range in types of proposals](#) which address e-learning and innovative pedagogies. [Click here](#) to read more about proposal information. For further general information, please visit [the conference website](#).

identify which of the prompts are tricks and which are treats. You can respond to the quiz on Facebook with your answers by writing the item number and simply "Trick" (false) or "Treat" (true). Ryan Damerow, our Executive Assistant, will keep track of the folks who answered all the questions correctly. We'll keep the challenge open until Monday, November 10th. Then, we'll have a drawing for a signed copy of a TIRF-published book, and we'll pay for the book to be delivered to you. We'll also reveal the answers to the items in our November newsletter, as well as identify the winner of the challenge. And just to be clear, even if one answer is incorrect, sorry, the trick is on you!

Happy Halloween, everyone! And wherever you may be, enjoy the season of souling, guising, *calaveritaing*, and trick-or-treating!

Kathi Bailey

PS: In keeping with the season, Ryan Damerow "ghost wrote" this Chair's Report.

TIRF's Trick-or-Treat Quiz:

1. TIRF supporters can now help the Foundation financially through the AmazonSmile program.
2. Since the inception of the DDG program, TIRF has awarded 62 grantees from 12 countries.
3. The Foundation has received major programmatic support through working with Educational Testing Service, Cambridge English Language Assessment, The British Council, National Geographic, The La Centra-Sumerlin Foundation, Anaheim University, and The Walt Disney Company.
4. TIRF will produce three publications in 2015, one regarding online language teacher education, another on the topic of teaching and learning of English grammar, and the last on language teacher education.
5. By taking this quiz on our Facebook page, it means that you automatically "Like" TIRF.

