

TIRF TODAY

June 2015

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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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Why I Support TIRF — By Dilek Tokay



Editor's note: In this piece, Prof. Dilek Tokay (pictured left) shares why she supports TIRF.

Conferences and concerts play an important role in my family. The former correspond to my profession; the latter to my cellist daughter. I believe the meaningfulness in both of these activities is the richness of plurality and sharing. Such experiences can be turning points in your life, in part designed to touch others' lives, and in part to strengthen a sense of belonging.

In 2011, I first met Kathi Bailey at the International Language Education Conference at [Sabanci University](#) in Istanbul. There she was a keynote speaker and I was the coordinator of the Writing Center. I was amazed by Kathi's philosophy, energy, and her many endeavors as the Chair of TIRF's Board of Trustees. My appreciation of her commitments drew me close to the TIRF family immediately.

I have been a supporter of TIRF over the years as a Board member of the [European Writing Centers Association \(EWCA\)](#). I always try to promote TIRF's visibility in my region of the world because every single component of its website is invaluable, enriching an educator's life academically, intellectually, and socially. TIRF's website pages on *Resources*, *Interviews*, *Maps & Timelines*, *Milestones*,

Projects, and *Conferences* are all amazing examples of service to the language learning and teaching community. The content there strengthens the sense of belonging. Each newsletter issue connects educational policy makers, ELT scholars, practitioners – the seniors as well as the novices – NGOs, corporate sector representatives, and media in a global world. These kinds of connections are what we need in our search for peace and excellence.

So why do I support TIRF in this way? Having been engaged in many local and international professional development projects in a multitude of capacities, I know what commitment and dedication are. I know the urge to make things work holistically and unanimously. I have often felt the desire to reach more than “many” educators. I always aim for my work to move beyond borders, rank, age, race, religion, and language. This awareness and commitment to growing is something like fuel for your system that makes you work. It makes me orchestrate the ties of the heart with those of the mind. I see this motif in the persona of the TIRF Trustees, the greater team, and the different components of the website. In issuing a monthly newsletter, TIRF leaders try so meticulously to make it as full as possible to support ELT professionals with a rich variety of resources.

Thank you, TIRF team, for your endless efforts to help us belong.

Why I Support TIRF — By Li-Fen Lin



Editor's note: In this piece, Dr. Li-Fen Lin (pictured left) shares why she supports TIRF.

I first learned about TIRF in 2010 when I invited Dr. Kathi Bailey to join an interest group-level colloquium at the CATESOL State Conference in Long Beach. I was then a PhD candidate and served as the coordinator of Non-Native Language Educators' Issues Interest Group. What caught my attention about TIRF was that the Foundation not only has a comprehensive collection of information and research on the teaching and learning of language, but also TIRF has supported students completing their doctoral research on topics related to the Foundation's priorities.

My doctoral dissertation was on teacher identity development of NESTs and NNESTs in an MATE-

SOL program, a research topic that is also one of TIRF's research priorities. I wished I had had known about TIRF earlier, so that I could have learned about the opportunities for doctoral funding and about the valuable resources on TIRF's website.

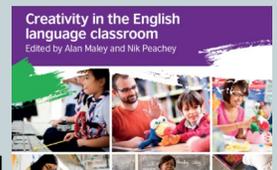
In March 2011, Kathi sent me the latest issue of *TIRF Today*, and I circulated this newsletter to my colleagues on the NNLEI-IG listserv. I have been doing so ever since. I always learn something new and important about language teaching and education from reading the newsletters or visiting the TIRF website. TIRF has opened the doors to resources and opportunities for many who want to hone their craft as language teachers and researchers. I came upon TIRF late in my career, but I'd like to introduce TIRF to colleagues and students and hope that I can help them find their doors to language education practice and research through TIRF.

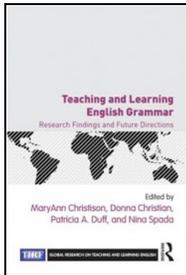
Creativity in Language Learning and Teaching

The British Council recently released a new volume on the topic of creativity in language learning and teaching. The focus of the book is on practical activities which can help to nurture, develop, and motivate students.

The activities will help teachers explore the role of creativity in the classroom, both in the sense of

helping students to express their unique creative identities and also by helping them to think about and use language in a creative way. The activities are suitable for a broad range of students. [Click here](#) to download the book for free.





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Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF

TIRF's Musical Mid-year Appeal

In last month's edition of *TIRF Today*, we announced that part of the Foundation's mid-year appeal would include a medley of songs by the group now known as Your Friendly Neighborhood Songsters. We are happy to share that the recording is now available on YouTube by [clicking here](#).

The collection of songs parodied in this summer's hottest hit include parts of "Summertime" by George Gershwin (from the opera "Porgy & Bess"), "A Summer Song" by Chad and Jeremy, and "Summertime, Summertime" by Sha-na-na. We had a great time recording this video with our colleagues Robert Broom, Anita Krishnan, and Tim Marquette from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. We hope that you will enjoy our video!

Two times each year, the Foundation solicits donations from the public. This year's fundraising efforts are more important than ever. As our [mid-year appeal letter](#) notes, TIRF's activities have reached new peaks, but at the same time, our annual revenues have declined. In order to continue making an impact on language education worldwide, we need your support.

There truly is no donation too small. Even gifts in

How We Know TIRF Is Growing

Across TIRF's various information dissemination channels, we have made claims such as stating that the Foundation's "visibility is growing" and "our activities have reached new peaks." So just how do we know these statements are true? Allow us to cite our Google Analytics data.

At the time of this writing (June 23rd), we have had more than 34,000 different users visit our website, and the year is not even half over. In 2014, total users of our website were 42,645. In 2013, this number was

Chair's Report — Creating a Community of Creativity

[Andreason \(2014\)](#) defines creativity as "the ability to produce something that is novel or original and useful or adaptive." She also says that "the essence of creativity is making connections and solving puzzles."

Although it does not discuss art, literature, theatre, or dance, this month's issue of *TIRF Today* is full of examples of creativity. On page one, Dilek Tokay and Li-Fen Lin write about how and why they have promoted TIRF's visibility by sharing the newsletter every month for several years with their own networks. Also on page one, we share an announcement about a new British Council book on creativity, which can be downloaded for free. On page two, Ryan Damerow reports on TIRF's recent Google Analytics data, which reveal how access to TIRF's website has grown in recent months. The website continues to be a vibrant, accessible tool, thanks largely to Ryan's creativity as the Foundation's webmaster.

Meeting with my colleagues on the TIRF Board of Trustees is always an exercise in creativity. So many excellent ideas are generated when we talk! An example is the new Alatis Prize, which began as an in-car conversation after a dinner one night with Jim and Penny Alatis. We are now soliciting nominations, locating potential reviewers, and writing the evaluation criteria for the Alatis Prize. We will make the first award at the TESOL Con-

vention in Baltimore next year. the \$5 to \$10 range will help us immensely, if we receive contributions from even a small percentage of our newsletter readers. Part of the difficulties we face as fundraisers for TIRF is raising cross-cultural awareness of nonprofit giving in the United States. We realize that many countries around the globe do not have a long tradition of the public supporting charities. The Foundation relies completely on contributions from the public to maintain its activities. We do not have revenue streams that some organizations use, such as those from membership dues, products, and services.

If you have benefitted from TIRF's work in the past (e.g., by making connections to new colleagues via our network, utilizing our reference lists, or have been influenced by one of our grantees' work), we would like to encourage you to consider making a donation to the Foundation. A few dollars, pesos, yuan, baht, rand, rupees, euros, or pounds will add up quickly if we can somehow persuade you to support TIRF with a financial donation. We accept contributions via PayPal on our website here: <http://www.tirfonline.org/donate/>.

Thank you for your continued support, and for considering making a donation to TIRF.

20,239; in 2012, this figure was 21,433.

Another notable area of information to demonstrate our growth is through looking at our non-US-based website visitors. So far this year, nearly 82% of visitors to our site hail from beyond US borders. In 2014, this figure was nearly 77%; in 2013, this figure was just under 74%; and in 2012, this figure was just over 62%.

Based on these data, we feel confident that our visibility is growing rapidly. We hope to be able to maintain this momentum for many years to come.

vention in Baltimore next year.

Finally, as I noted in my Chair's Report for May, 2015, we have tried to take a very creative approach in launching the 2015 mid-year appeal. If you go to the link in the story above, you will see the results of a team effort. In producing the TIRF medley encouraging you to give to TIRF, Anita Krishnan and I worked on the lyrics. It is amazing to see how her mind works – using her quirky, funny word-play skills to connect vocabulary related to the donation theme with the rhyme schemes of the songs we were parodying. Then Tim Marquette, our amazing accompanist and tenor, worked out the chords, the harmonies, and the embellishments. Ryan, Anita, and Robert Broom worked out the humor, bouncing silly ideas off one another until we all had the giggles and couldn't possibly sing. (Sometimes it is really great to laugh until you cry!)

Reaching out to TIRF's constituencies around the world each month in this newsletter can be a daunting task, but it can also be very rewarding, as we work toward creating a community of creativity. I see our work, as Andreason said, as "making connections and solving puzzles." The puzzles we endeavor to solve are embodied in [TIRF's mission statement](#). They involve trying to raise funds to promote research in our field; promoting the application of research to practical language problems; collecting, or-

ganizing, and disseminating information and research on the teaching and learning of language; and influencing decision-makers with research results. The solutions to these puzzles depend largely on making connections. I hope that in reading this issue of *TIRF Today*, you will feel connected to the Foundation's mission, and that you will support our mission by making a financial commitment to TIRF.

All of these anecdotes I've shared support the notion that running a foundation depends upon creative thinking. Asking our stakeholders to engage in their own creative-writing processes to contribute to *TIRF Today*, deciding on how to best honor a long-time Board member, and recording a parody of songs to raise money to support our efforts all require outside-the-box thinking. I would like to challenge you to think about how your gift to TIRF is also a creative decision. The opportunities you can help to forge for others with your gift are truly endless.



Anita Krishnan
(Photo by Nitin
Brahmbhatt)

Kathi Bailey