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An Interview with Professor Kathleen Bailey

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Background

Professor Bailey is the President of TIRF--the International Research Foundation for English Language Education. She has also served as the President of AAAL (the American Association for Applied Linguistics). She was a member of the Board of Directors of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from 1992-95 and again from 1997-2001. In 1998, she was President of the international TESOL organization. She has been a member of the editorial board of TESOL Quarterly, Prospect (the Australian Journal of Applied Linguistics) and The Modern Language Journal. She currently serves on the editorial board of Language Teaching Research as well as IJLTS. She has co-edited nine books. Along with Ryan Dameron, she is a Series Editor for the Routledge Taylor Francis series, Global Research on Teaching and Learning English, which is co-published with TIRF. Her articles have appeared in TESOL Quarterly, TESOL Newsletter, Language Learning, Language Testing, and various anthologies. She is the co-author of Focus on the Classroom: An Introduction to Classroom Research, Pursuing Professional Development: The Self as Source, and Exploring Second Language Classroom Research, Learning About Language Assessment: Dilemmas, Decisions and Directions, and the author of Language Teacher Supervision: A Case-based Approach. She was the recipient of the Allen Griffin Award for Outstanding Higher Education Teacher of the Monterey Peninsula in 1985 and 2007, and the Leslie Eliason Excellence in Teaching Award in 2013. In 2007 she received the James E. Alatis Award for Service to the International TESOL Association, and in 2011 she received the Heinle Cengage Outstanding Achievement Award. She is currently a professor of applied linguistics at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey California (MIIS). In what follows, KB stands for Kathleen Bailey and KS for Karim Sadeghi.

KS: Thank you so much Prof. Bailey for accepting my invitation to take part in this interview despite your very busy schedule and end of the year involvements. I would first invite you to talk about your academic and professional life highlighting how you decided to become an applied linguist.

KB: I studied to be an ESL teacher after living in South Korea for a year. My undergraduate degree was in English Literature, and I'd also gotten certified to teach secondary school in California. But living in Korea gave me the experience of trying to learn a new language and survive in a new culture, which I found fascinating.

Upon returning to California, I studied for a masters degree in TESL at the University of California Los Angeles. While completing my degree, I found that doing research was as rewarding as teaching, so I went on to get a PhD in Applied Linguistics there. I began working at MIIS while I was finishing my dissertation, and have taught here for 35 years.

KS: Could you talk more about your scholarly products? Although your almost-a-book-long CV provides every detail, please tell us how many publications you have and what the major focuses of these publications have been. How do you compare your first and last publications in terms of focus and topics covered? Do you consider your recent interest in language education policies and digital learning (as the foci of your recent edited volumes) a shift from your past research that centered primarily on second language classroom?

KB: According to my most recent CV, it looks like I have published sixteen books and 106 chapters or articles. In the past few years, I have been editing research books in the TIRF-Routledge series, "Global Research on Teaching and Learning English." These books include the two you refer to here -- Digital Language Learning and Teaching: Research, Theory, and Practice, and Global Perspectives on Language Education Policies, which will be in print in February of 2018.

My research and teaching interests have broadened over the years, but language classroom research still intrigues me. I have also written books related to the courses I teach -- language assessment, language teacher supervision, language teacher education, and the teaching of speaking.

KS: You have a vast teaching, research and administrative experience spanning over your 40+ years of academic life. How compatible do you find these different roles and do you think whether language teachers should get engaged in research and administration as well as teaching?

KB: For me personally, the balance of teaching, research and administration has been ideal. Whether or not teachers want to get involved in administration would depend largely on their own personal and professional contexts. It can be very frustrating at times, but it can also be rewarding if you are working with a good team. I do believe it's helpful and informative for us as teachers to conduct research in our own programs, to gain insights into our practice, to improve our practice, and to improve our teaching and our students' opportunities for learning.

KS: Most of our readers would probably associate you with TIRF, of which you are the president. Could you introduce this organization briefly and tell us what services it offers language educators and researchers and how interested professionals may get involved?

KB: TIRF is The International Research Foundation for English Language Education. It was started by the international TESOL association in 1998. Since that time the Foundation has published five books and four key issues papers, as well as a series of commissioned papers on mobile assisted language learning. As of 2017, TIRF has provided 114 Doctoral Dissertation Grants to students from a total of 24 countries.

According to the foundation's website, TIRF's vision is that in the 21st century, personal and social value accrues to individuals who are proficient in English and in some additional language. Therefore, TIRF's mission embodies four major goals:

- *To implement a research and development program that will generate new knowledge and inform and improve the quality of English language teaching and learning;*
- *To promote the application of research to practical language problems;*
- *To collect, organize, and disseminate information and research on the teaching and learning of language; and*
- *To influence the formation and implementation of appropriate language education policies, recognizing the importance of indigenous languages and cultures worldwide, and of English as an international language.*

Teachers can get involved by visiting the Foundation's website, where there is a page of links to various resources, including resources for language teachers and access to reference lists on over 210 topics of interest to applied linguists, language teachers, and researchers.

They can also sign up to receive our monthly e-newsletter by writing to info@trifonline.org and asking to have their email address added to our mailing list. TIRF also has a Facebook page. TIRF Trustees make presentations at conferences around the world and are always interested to hear about professionals' concerns. And, of course, we are always seeking donations!

KS: You have offered numerous workshops in different countries and have been a frequent plenary speaker at numerous TESOL conventions. Could you talk about some of the more recent topics you have presented in your lectures? What issues have you found teachers or researchers to be in more need of knowing about in these workshops and conferences?

KB: *In terms of the kinds of workshops I give, I'm very interested in communication strategies and how we can help our students increase their fluency and confidence in speaking their new language. I'm also working on washback—the influence of tests on teaching and learning—as well as the use of dialogue journals in language teaching and learning. Creativity, innovation, teacher professionalism, and the diary studies continue to interest me as workshop topics. I find that teachers are usually interested in these issues too.*

KS: Many practicing teachers who attend TESOL workshops/conferences complain that the courses/lectures are mainly theoretical and of little help in their actual teaching context. Do you agree with such a criticism? What can be done to make such programmes more practical in order to meet professional development needs of participating teachers?

KB: *Teachers can get frustrated if they spend time and energy to attend a course or lecture and find it doesn't meet their needs. I always try to pick a topic that is appropriate for the audience—to the extent that I understand who the audience is. I was once asked to give a conference talk for elementary school teachers, but part of the feedback I got was from a participant who complained that my presentation was geared too much to elementary and secondary school teachers! That person said he/she had expected to learn more theory and about my research!*

So my strategy in giving workshops and conference talks is (1) to work with the conference theme, (2) to try to find out who the attendees are likely to be, and (3) to choose a practical topic that will be of interest to a wide range of teachers. I always try to include a bit of humor and to sneak a little bit of theory in too. I believe it was Penny Ur who said, "There's nothing so practical as a good theory" and I believe that is true. As language teachers we need to know the research and theory that provide the rationales for our pedagogical choices.

KS: You also are an editorial member of a good number of applied linguistics journals including ours. What are some of the challenges you have faced in your editorship member role? What are some of the major issues you have found in examining PhD theses or books and papers you have reviewed for publishers and journals?

KB: I find editing and reviewing manuscripts to be very rewarding. However, it is rather annoying to be sent a manuscript that hasn't been properly proofread, or if the reference list is inaccurate, but generally I learn a great deal by editing. The biggest problem in reviewing manuscripts for journals is that some editors want the results in two weeks. I usually can't meet that kind of deadline and have to decline to do the review.

KS: Are you happy with you being an applied linguist? If you were given a second chance to select your career, would you choose to be an applied linguist once more? Why?

KB: I'm very happy with my career choice as an applied linguist. My work has allowed me to visit many countries and meet interesting people. Besides, even when I teach the same courses year after year, I keep updating my knowledge base and the students change, so I'm never bored. I believe that being an applied linguist has also enabled me to do some good in the world.

KS: Many thanks again Prof. Bailey for taking the time to participate in this interview. It is a great pleasure for me and the *IJLTR* readers to get to know a leading applied linguist further.

