

## **AN AWARD TO HONOUR AND FURTHER THE WORK OF PENNY MCKAY**

The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) and the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) have proudly launched an appeal for donations to support *The Penny McKay Award for Promising Doctoral Research in School-Based Language Development and Curriculum*.

This collaborative initiative seeks to honour and advance Penny McKay's contribution to education.

The award will consist of a certificate and cash sum. It will be given annually to a doctoral candidate in an Australian university whose research will benefit the teaching, learning and/or assessment in Australian schools of English as a second/additional language, Standard Australian English as an additional variety, English as a foreign language, languages other than English or Indigenous languages. The precise criteria for the award will be determined by a joint committee of the two associations but will rest broadly on a description of the research project and referee support. The recipient will be expected to submit a paper and attend the conference at which the award is presented.

Funds to support the award are sought from individuals and institutions in Australia and overseas. These funds will be invested securely in a manner agreed by both associations according to the normal procedures governing such funds. The amount of the award will be determined according to the funds raised and reputable financial advice.

### **Background**

**Penny McKay PhD (Univ. Qld), MA (Arizona State), B.Ed. (SA CAE)**

As a teacher, consultant, researcher, keynote speaker and professional activist, Penny McKay has been a leader in language education in Australia and internationally. Working collaboratively with educators and researchers in schools, she pioneered an approach to assessing learners' development in English as an additional language. She was committed to four fundamental principles. First, assessment frameworks should be tied to empirical, classroom-based observations of English language learners of different ages and backgrounds. Second, those frameworks should respect and respond to classroom teachers' understandings of and insights into their learners. Third, frameworks must be informed by theory as it continually develops. And finally, they must be designed to support learners' language development and to inform teachers in their teaching.

These principles are dynamic and generative. They have set a national and an international benchmark for the assessment of second/other language learning by children and adults, and can be applied to educational assessment more generally.

### **Some of Penny's Publications**

- *Assessing Young Language Learners*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- *Planning and Teaching Creatively in a Required Curriculum*, TESOL, 2006.

- *Assessing, Monitoring and Understanding English as a Second Language in Schools, The NLLIA ESL Bandscales Version 2* (ed.), QUT and Independent Schools Queensland, 2007.
- *Five Minute Activities for Young Learners* (with Jenni Guse), Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- *Bringing Creative Teaching into the Young Learner Classroom* (with Lynne Cameron), Oxford University Press, due 2010.

### **Some Reflections**

“All of us approach teaching in different ways. For me, teaching has been, from the beginning, an iterative activity in which I’ve worked with students and educators to search for, try out and disseminate effective teaching practices. I have always sought to observe, ask questions, and find patterns in how English and other languages are learned and taught. My life as a language consultant and researcher has been a stimulating journey of workshops, drafts and feedback seminars with students and colleagues. My colleagues’ questions about what is happening and being trialled in their classrooms has made an invaluable contribution to my work. We have become successful as language educators by working collaboratively and sharing our knowledge and skills like this.”

Penny McKay 15th February 2009

“Penny was wonderful. ... We’d get into the classroom and we’d say, “And then this should happen and this should happen’. But she’d keep asking us, ‘What *does* happen?’ ‘What *is* happening there?’ ‘What *is* development?’”

A co-researcher describing Penny’s approach to classroom research,  
interview with Helen Moore, 30 January, 1997.

### **How to Donate**

Cheque or money order payable to: Applied Linguistics Association of Australia – Penny McKay Award. Send to Dr Honglin Chen, Treasurer ALAA, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, NSW. 2522. Australia.

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*If you would like a receipt, please provide the following information to the ALAA Treasurer, Dr Honglin Chen, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, NSW. 2522. Australia (email: honglin@uow.edu.au)*

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***Please give generously to honour Penny, further her contribution and support this collaborative endeavour.***