ABOUT THE PENNY MCKAY MEMORIAL AWARD

Penny McKay Memorial Award for an Outstanding Thesis in Language Education

The Penny McKay Memorial Award honours Penny’s contribution to research and development in second/additional language education.

The Award is for an outstanding doctoral thesis which benefits the teaching and learning of second/additional languages in Australian schools and pre-schools, including Indigenous languages, community languages, foreign languages, Standard Australian English as an additional language or variety, and English as a foreign language.

The Award is jointly offered by the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA), the Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA) and the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand (ALTAANZ). Finances related to the Award are administered by ALAA.

The 2015 Award consists of $500, a certificate and free conference registration at the 2015 combined ALAA-ALANZ Conference in Adelaide (Monday 30th November - Wednesday 2nd December). The winner will be offered a slot to present a paper on an aspect of their research at that conference.

The winner will be formally announced at the AGM of each Association and the 2015 Award will be presented at the 2015 ALAA-ALANZ conference. The winner’s name and a 300 word summary of their thesis will be published in each Association’s journal (ALAA – The Australian Review of Applied Linguistics; ACTA – TESOL in Context; ALTAANZ – Language Assessment Matters). The names of winners in every year will be shown on the website of each Association.

Donating to the Award

The Award was established and is maintained from donations from individuals, professional associations and other institutions in Australia and overseas, and from the sale of Penny’s extensive professional library. These funds are invested securely as agreed by ALAA, ACTA and ALTAANZ according to the normal procedures governing such funds.
Your help is needed to maintain this Award which carries forward Penny’s lifelong commitment to language education that is grounded in both research and the insights of practising teachers.

To donate to the maintenance of this Award, please go to http://tesol.org.au/About-ACTA/PENNY-MCKAY-MEMORIAL-FUND/Make-a-Donation for further details. If you are registering for the 2015 ALAA-ALANZ Conference, the Registration page also includes an option to donate to the fund. For details, go to: https://www.conveneit.com/secure/onsite/ling_dec_15/

Eligibility for the Award

The Award is awarded annually for a doctoral thesis submitted at an Australian university and passed in the preceding academic year. To be eligible for consideration, the thesis should be focused on aspects of school-based second/additional language education, such as language development, curriculum, teaching or assessment. (This requirement includes pre-school settings.) The applicant must be a verified member of ALAA or their State/Territory ACTA affiliate or ALTAANZ.

Applying for the Award

Applications for the 2015 Award are due by midnight on Sunday 13th September 2015 to the ALAA Secretary, Dr Colette Mrowa-Hopkins, Flinders University colette.mrowa-hopkins@flinders.edu.au

Applications should consist of:

i. the thesis abstract

ii. the Table of Contents from the thesis

iii. one chapter from the thesis that the applicant believes best demonstrates the outstanding qualities of the overall thesis

iv. copies of all examiners’ reports
v. a statement of support from one of the applicant’s supervisors; this statement should complement (not duplicate) the examiners’ reports, may comment on anything in the examiners’ reports, and may elaborate on relevant matters not covered in examiners’ reports

vi. if the thesis research was *not* carried out in a school or pre-school setting and/or with (pre-)school-age second language learners, a statement (no more than 100 words) explaining how the thesis findings are relevant to school settings and school-age learners

vii. a summary of the thesis outlining the background, methodology, findings and contributions of the study (max. 300 words); this summary will be used to describe the award-winning thesis on the ALAA and ACTA websites and in their respective journals

viii. a correctly completed Application Form (See separate documents entitled *Application Details* and *Application Form*)

Applications must contain all of the above otherwise they will be excluded. Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their applications by early October 2015.

**How Applications Will Be Evaluated**

(1) Procedures

Applications will be assessed by a panel of three, being the Presidents of ALAA, ACTA and ALTAANZ or a suitable representative as nominated by the President of each Association. The panel will have the option of co-opting a recognised academic expert in the area of second/additional language education.

The President of each Association will present the name and details of each year’s winner to the Association’s Executive Committee for ratification and approval that the winner be notified and the Award be given (as per above).

The Award may not be given in a particular year if the panel judges that none of the applications are at a suitable standard.
(2) Evaluation Criteria

Each application (parts i – vi above) will be judged holistically against the following criteria:

(i) the contribution of the thesis to knowledge about second/additional language learning (pre-/school-aged learners

(ii) the innovation and originality of the approach taken by the thesis to its subject matter and/or methodology and/or presentation

(iii) the clarity of writing and presentation demonstrated by the thesis.

To view the report format used by the Panel, see separate document entitled Evaluation Criteria.

Information

Information about the Award is shown on the website of each Association.

Further enquiries about the Award may be directed to the Secretaries of ALAA, ACTA or ALTAANZ

More about Penny McKay

Penny’s approach to teaching:

All of us approach teaching in different ways. For me, teaching has been, from the beginning, an iterative activity – working with students, teachers and researchers to search for, try out and disseminate effective teaching practices. I've 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 been 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

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

*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?’*

*To read more about Penny McKay:*