

National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages

Tenth Annual Conference

April 26th - 29th, 2007

Madison, WI

The 10th Annual Conference of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages was held at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin, April 26-29, 2007. Held under the theme, "Professional Horizons in LCTLs: Reality and Promise", the conference was organized by the NCOLCTL Secretariat from its offices at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

This year's participants were drawn from as far afield as Italy, Portugal and Britain while many LCTL professionals from Asia, Africa and the Middle East presented on various facets of less commonly taught languages. Abstracts from LCTL practitioners at various universities and government departments were accepted while exhibits from publishing concerns were also showcased.

Sponsors of this year's conference included the University of Wisconsin-Madison International Studies; the International Institute, the UW Anonymous Fund, the Center for East Asian Studies, the Center for South Asian Studies, the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, the Ettinger Family Foundation, the Department of African Languages and Literature, the National African Language Resource Center, NCOLCTL, and the UW-Madison College of Letters and Science.

Led by Christine L. Brown of the Glastonbury (CT) Public School System, the traditional Pre-Conference Workshop was held on Thursday, April 26, under the banner "The Role of Standards in the LCTLs". NCOLCTL's Vice-President, Hong Gang Jin, chaired this workshop which addressed issues involving the impact of standards across disciplines, the content of the language standards K-16, material development needs, assessment development and the implications of standards-based teaching, among others.

That same evening, NCOLCTL President, Gautami Shah, greeted conference attendees at the Conference Welcome Reception. Immediately after her address, the Natyarpana Dance Company presented their well-received "Sacred Geometry" performance as part of the Welcome Reception. This was followed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Second Semester Arabic class with their polished performance of "Bush in Cairo", an imaginary cultural encounter between President George Bush and Egyptian television programming.

The next morning, April 27, General Welcome Remarks were delivered by Antonia Schleicher, Gilles Bousquet, Magdalena Hauner, and Gautami Shah. Immediately following, Ambassador Robert Finn, of the Woodrow Wilson School and Lecturer in Turkish Literature in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, delivered a plenary address, titled, "Multilingual, Multidimensional, Multitasked".

Four other plenary sessions were held during the course of the conference, including Prince Firas bin Raad, the Private Secretary for Health Affairs to King Abdullah of Jordan. The Prince's paper was entitled "LCTLs and Peace-building in the Middle East." Other plenary speakers included JNCL-NCLIS' Executive Director J. David Edwards and CASL's Executive Director, Richard Brecht who presented on "US Language Policies in the 21 st Century," and Rital Oleksak, current President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Almost seventy (70) papers were presented at this year's conference on topics ranging from standards and assessment in LCTLs, developing online LCTL materials, curriculum design for 21st century challenges, online LCTLs teacher training, and many others.

NCOLCTL member organizations such as the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) - a professional membership association committed to advancing the teaching of Russian language and literature, the South Asian Language Teachers Association (SALTA), and the Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian and Malay (COTIM) held their annual meetings during the conference. In addition, the Hindi Standards Working Committee and the South Asia Language Resource Center also conducted a workshop during the conference.

On Saturday, April 28, a banquet was held in honor of Thomas J. Hinnebusch, winner of this year's A. Ronald Walton Award, which recognizes distinguished service in the field of LCTLs. In his acceptance speech, Hinnebusch traced his long and distinguished career in service of LCTLs from his days at the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania in the 1960s to his current Language Materials Project at UCLA that focuses on over 100 LCTLs. He also challenged established professionals and up-and-coming scholars in the field to harness technological innovations to further LCTL goals.

The NCOLCTL conference remains a substantial forum for the sharing of successes and problems in the field of LCTLs. Many attendees expressed gratitude for information sharing about professional issues in LCTLs, especially matters of standards and assessment, the STARTALK program, and others.

The staff of the NCOLCTL Secretariat are grateful to the many people who contributed so much of their time and energy into making this year's conference a success. We would especially like to thank the volunteers who gave their time at the registration table, as session chairs, as performers, etc. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for the 11th NCOLCTL annual conference.