

NCOLCTL 2008 Conference Report

The 11th Annual Conference of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages was held at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin, April 24-27, 2008, under the theme, "LCTLs and Globalization: Challenges, Expectations, and Possibilities." The conference was organized by the NCOLCTL Secretariat from its offices at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Held in conjunction with the 12th annual meeting of the African Language Teachers Association, this year's conference brought together language teachers and professionals from as far afield as China, France, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom, while many LCTL professionals from the U.S. also 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 and professional concerns were also showcased.

Sponsors of this year's conference included the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Gilles Bousquet of the International Institute, UW's Division of International Studies; the UW Anonymous Fund, the Center for East Asian Studies, the Center for South Asian Studies, the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, the African Studies Program, and the National African Language Resource Center.

The traditional Pre-Conference Workshop, led by Audrey Heining-Boynton and Ray Clifford, was held on Thursday, April 24. The subject was, "Lessons Learned in the World of Conducting and Publishing Research: Ten Little Questions and their Important Answers". NCOLCTL's in-coming president, Hong Gang Jin, chaired this workshop which gave a step-by-step process for creating research and ultimately becoming published. That same evening, NCOLCTL out-going president, Gautami Shah, greeted conference attendees at the Conference Welcome Reception.

The next morning, April 25, General Welcome Remarks were delivered by Antonia Schleicher, Gilles Bousquet, Gary Sandefur, and Gautami Shah. Immediately following, Donald C. Fischer of the Defense Language Institute delivered a plenary presentation entitled, "Achieving Production and Proficiency in Less Commonly Taught Languages."

Four other plenary sessions were held during the course of the conference, led by LCTL pioneers such as Robert Slater, of the National Security Education Program, Catherine Ingold, of the National Foreign Language Center, Nelleke Van Deusen-Scholl, of the Yale Center for Language Study, and Ray Clifford, current ACTFL President.

In all, 160 papers were presented at this year's conference on topics ranging from standards and assessment in LCTLs, corrective feedback, LCTLs and technology in the 21st century challenges, online LCTLs teacher training, and many others.

NCOLCTL member organizations such as the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA), the South Asia Language Teachers Association (SALTA), and the Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian and Malay (COTIM) held their annual meetings during the conference.

On Saturday, April 26, a banquet was held in honor of Erika Gilson, winner of this year's A. Ronald Walton Award, which recognizes distinguished service in the field of LCTLs. In her acceptance speech, Gilson traced her long and distinguished career in service of LCTLs, especially with Turkic languages. She also reminisced about her experiences with LCTL trailblazers, such as Ron Walton, Dick Brecht, Terry Ramos, and Dick Lambert, among others.

The NCOLCTL conference remains a substantial forum for the sharing of successes and challenges in the field of LCTLs. Many attendees expressed gratitude for the chance to share information about

professional issues in LCTLs, especially matters of standards and assessment, the STARTALK program, and others.

The staff of the NCOLCTL Secretariat is 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 Beatrice Mkenda, Florence Olamijulo, Maria Manalo, Adedoyin Ogunfeyimi, Huyen Phan, Nafeesa Nichols, Beatrice Okelo, and Olayinka Olagbegi who donated their time and effort to ensure the conference's success. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for the 12th NCOLCTL annual conference in 2009.