

NCOLCTL 2011 Conference Report

The 14th Annual Conference of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages was held at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin, April 7-10, 2011, under the theme, "Building Language Capacity: Collaboration, Innovation, Globalization" The conference was organized by the NCOLCTL Secretariat from its offices at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Held in conjunction with the 15th annual meeting of the African Language Teachers Association, this year's conference brought together language teachers and professionals from as far afield as Turkey, Kenya, Japan, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Singapore, 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 National Language Service Corps, the National African Language Resource Center, ChinaSprout, the Center for South Asia, the Center for International Business Education and Research and the Center for Global Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

There were four Pre-Conference Workshops held on Thursday, April 7, 2011. Dr. Jacques du Plessis from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, led a workshop entitled "New Technologies and Language Learning which was chaired by NCOLCTL Executive Board Member, Dr. Eva Prionas. In this workshop, Dr. du Plessis showed and told of diverse technologies that can support language learning and teaching. Dr. Francois Victor Tochon from the University of Wisconsin-Madison led a second workshop entitled "Towards a Project-Based, Deep Approach to Language Learning which was chaired by NCOLCTL Vice-President Dr. Alwiya S. Omar. In this Workshop, Dr. Tochon explored and presented on how using a deep approach to language learning is transdisciplinary and transformative in contrast to transmissive education. Michelle Guilfoil from the U.S. Department of Education presented a third workshop entitled "Developing Strong Proposals for the Fiscal Year 2012 Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) Program". This workshop was chaired by NCOLCTL Immediate Past President Dr. Hong Gang Jin and was geared towards potential applicants interested in applying to the Fiscal Year 2012 Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad Program grant competition. Dr. Kirk Belnap from the National Middle East Language Resource Center along with Dr. Mahmoud Al-Batal from the University of Texas, Austin and Dr. Munther Youness from Cornell University presented the fourth workshop entitled " Integrating Colloquial in the Arabic Curriculum: An Examination of Programmatic Input and Learners' Output". This workshop was chaired by NCOLCTL Executive Board Member Dr. Muhammad Eissa. In their workshop, the presenters focused on implementing an "integrated approach" to teaching Arabic and illustrated both the early stages and results for Advanced-level students who began their study of Arabic using such an approach. That same evening, NCOLCTL Vice-President Alwiya S. Omar, greeted conference attendees at the Conference Welcome Reception.

The next morning, April 8, 2011 general Welcome Remarks were delivered by University of Wisconsin Madison's Dean Gilles Bousquet and NCOLCTL President Dr. Catherine Ingold. Immediately following, Dr. Richard Brecht, Director of the Center for Advanced Study of Language, delivered the keynote address entitled, "'There is a Tide in the Affairs of Man...'The Current Vision Toward the Future Build of Capacity in Critical Languages".

Three other plenary sessions were held during the course of the conference. Two were led by LCTL heavyweights in the form of NCOLCTL President Dr. Catherine Ingold, of the National Foreign Language Center and Dr. Steven Ross from the University of Maryland. The third was an African Language Teachers Association (ALTA) plenary by Dr. Kolawole Owolabi from the University of Ibadan in Nigeria.

In all, 160 papers were presented at this year's conference on topics ranging from methodology in LCTLs, assessment in LCTLs, L2 Research, technology in the LCTL classroom, LCTLs teacher training, and many others. Poster sessions were also presented on Saturday, April 9, 2011.

NCOLCTL member organizations such as the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA), the South Asia Language Teachers Association (SALTA), and Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL) held their annual meetings during the conference. This year saw the Modern Greek Language Teachers Association (MGLTA) hold its meeting at the NCOLCTL Conference for the first time.

On Saturday, April 9, a banquet was held in honor of Dr. J. David Edwards, winner of the 2011 A. Ronald Walton Award, which recognizes distinguished service in the field of LCTLs. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Edwards traced his long and distinguished career in service of LCTLs, especially his work in Washington DC. He also reminisced about his experiences with LCTL trailblazers, such as Ron Walton and Dick Brecht 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 Bongani Mbatha, Said Hannouchi, Kazeem Kehinde Sanuth, Silas Upenyu Majee, Samuel Darkwa, Adeola Agoke, Judith Namayengo, Filipino Lubua, Emmanuella Datu and Forster Asare who donated their time and effort to ensure the conference's success. Special thanks also to the staff at the NALRC for their exceptional and committed support. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for the 15th NCOLCTL annual conference in 2012.