

NCOLCTL 2015 Conference Report

The 18th Annual Conference of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages was held at Hilton Washington Dulles Airport, April 24-26, 2015, under the theme, "The Languages of America in the 21st century." The conference was organized by the NCOLCTL Secretariat from its offices at Indiana University.

Held in conjunction with the 19th Annual Conference of African Language Teachers Association, this year's conference brought together language teachers and professionals from as far afield as China, United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tanzania, while many LCTL professionals from the U.S. also presented on various aspects 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.

The exhibitors of this year's conference included The Language Flagship, Center for Language Excellence (CLE), ICA Language Services, IU CIBER (Center for International Business Education and Research), NALRC (National African Languages Resource Center), INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, and SCOLA.

The traditional Pre-Conference Workshop, led by Kirk Belnap (Brigham Young University) and Nicole Mills of Harvard University was held on Thursday, April 23. The subject was, "Self- Efficacy for LCTL Teachers." Pre-Conference Workshop two was held by Esther Ham of Indiana University, Bloomington and the subject was "Building an Online Language Program 101." The next morning, April 24, welcome remarks were delivered by Dr. Jacques C du Plessis, NCOLCTL President and Dr. Adeolu Ademoyo, ALTA President. Then Dr. Richard Brecht of the University of Maryland delivered the keynote presentation entitled "Common Ground Across the 'Bending the Arc of America's Languages: The Emergence of LCTLs in America" The keynote speaker's presentation was followed by three Colloquium Parallel Sessions on "Multilingualism and its Legal Implications: A New Shibboleth for Asylum Seekers?" ; "Textbook writing for LCTLs in the 21st Century: A case study for a Turkish textbook," and lastly "Why the Time is NOW for African Language Storybooks for Reading." delivered and chaired by prominent linguistic scholars in academia.

Three other plenary sessions were held during the course of the conference; Dr. Margaret E. Malone of the Center of Applied Linguistics concentrated her plenary on the assessment of outcomes in LCTLs. In the ALTA's plenary, the 2013 NCOLCTL Startalk graduates talked about their transformative journey from native speakers to productive language instructors. Focusing on the quality of curriculum, Dr. Mary Lynn Redmond's plenary emphasized the need to set proficiency targets across departmental foreign language levels in order to prepare students with the necessary language skills to enter workforce.

Following the second plenary was the NCOLCTL Past Presidents/Directors Panel chaired by Jacques, du Plessis. As NCOLCTL celebrated its 25th anniversary, the panel reflected on their experiences and strategies of to be put in place towards the future. The panels consisted of Drs. Teresita Ramos, Eyamba Bokamba, Gilead Morahg, John Schillinger, Frederick Jackson, Antonia Schleicher, Michael Everson, Gautami Shah, Hong Gang Jin, Catherine Ingold and Alwiya Omar.

The last plenary session featured Dr. William P. Rivers of the Joint Committee for Languages and the National Council for Languages and International Studies spoke on "Language Advocacy at the National Level"

In all, there were 133 presentations and colloquiums at this year's conference on topics ranging from curriculum standards and assessment in LCTLs, corrective feedback, language acquisition and instructional strategies, student perceptions, the use of technology and authentic materials, online LCTLs teacher training, and many others.

Both NCOLCTL and ALTA held their annual meetings of their Boards and Delegate Assemblies during the conference. On Friday, April 25, a banquet dinner was organized in honor of Dr. Catherine Ingold,

from University of Maryland, winner of this year's A. Ronald Walton Award, which recognizes distinguished service in the field of LCTLs. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Ingold, the Executive Director of the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), and a policy, research and development institute reminisced about her experiences with her passion to support the United States to meet its needs for languages other than English.

In addition, two research awards were given at the banquet by NFMLTA and NCOLCTL.

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 and experiences about professional issues in LCTLs, especially in 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 John Adeika, Nana Amoah, Taiwo Ehineni Joyce Nyakato, Xiaojing Kou, Victor Alabi, Ahmad Usman, Emmanuella Datu, Betty Dlamani and Daisy Lamptey who donated their time and effort to ensure the success of the conference. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for the 18th NCOLCTL annual conference in Washington, D.C., where our organization will celebrate its 25th anniversary.