

NCOLCTL 2014 Conference Report

The 17th Annual Conference of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages was held at Westin Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, April 25-27, 2014, under the theme, "Collaboration and Internationalization: Enhancing and Sustaining Quality." The conference was organized by the NCOLCTL Secretariat from its offices at Indiana University.

Held in conjunction with the 18th 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 American Councils for International Education, Arabic Language and Culture, CIBER (Center for International Business Education and Research), Dunwoody Press, Georgetown University Press, Mutual Omaha Financial Advisors, NASILP (National Association of Self-Instruction Language Programs), the National African Language Resource Center, National Language Service Center, and SCOLA.

The traditional Pre-Conference Workshop, led by Mr. Mohammed Tamimi of the University of Arizona was held on Thursday, April 24. The subject was, "Hands-on Training on Using Web 2.0 to Teach Language as Culture." The next morning, April 25, welcome remarks were delivered by Dr. Alwiya Omar, NCOLCTL President and Dr. John Wa'njogu, ALTA President. Then Dr. Richard Brecht of the University of Maryland delivered the keynote presentation entitled "Common Ground Across the 'Language Enterprise': Vision, Value and Ventures." The keynote speaker's presentation was followed by the plenary session on "Careers in Translation and Interpretation" delivered by Dr. Jiri Stejskal of CETRA Language Solutions.

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.

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

Professor Eyamba Bokamba from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, winner of this year's A. Ronald Walton Award, which recognizes distinguished service in the field of LCTLs. In his acceptance speech, Professor Bokamba, who is one of the founding fathers of NCOLCTL reminisced about his experiences with the organization in collaboration with the trailblazers - Professors Richard Brecht, Erika Gilson, Teresita Ramos, and the late Ronald Walton. In addition, two research awards were given at the banquet by NFMLTA and NCOLCTL; the winners were Snezhana Zheltoukhova of the University of Wisconsin – Madison and Tingting Chen from the University of Iowa.

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, Muhammed Umar, Taiwo Ehineni, Francis Mwanzia, Nana Amoah, Joyce Nyakato, Sreeja Ketineni, 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.