

NCOLCTL 2009 Conference Report

The National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages held their 12th Annual Conference at the Sheraton Madison Hotel in Madison, Wisconsin, from April 23-26, 2009. The theme was "Towards a New Paradigm in LCTLs" The conference was organized by the NCOLCTL Secretariat here at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The conference itself was held in conjunction with the 13th annual conference of the African Language Teachers Association. The conference was well attended by language teachers and professionals from Africa, Europe, Asia and most parts of South and North America.

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. LCTL professionals from the U.S. as well as practitioners at various universities and government departments presented on various facets of less-commonly taught languages. Exhibits from publishing and professional concerns were also displayed.

On Thursday, April 23, 2009, there was a Pre-Conference Workshop led by Prof. Hong Gang Jin. She is a professor of Chinese at Hamilton College as well as the current President of NCOLCTL. The title of her presentation was, "Task-based language teaching and performance assessment." This session was chaired by Michael Everson, past president of NCOLCTL. The day ended with a welcome address from Gautami Shah, the preceding President of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL).

On Friday, April 24, welcome remarks were delivered by Antonia Schleicher, Hong Gang Jin, Leonce Rushubirwa, Bac Hoai Tran, and Gilles Bousquet. This session was followed by the first Plenary session by Dean Gilles Bousquet and Elizabeth 'Libby' Burmaster on "Creating a Unified Voice for the Roles of Critical Languages and Global Competitiveness". The second plenary session was chaired by Catherine Ingold and delivered by Richard Brecht on "Language Futures" A Framework for Determining Strategic Investments and Returns in Critical Languages". Three other plenary sessions were held during the course of the conference and led by LCTL pioneers such as Shuhan Wang of the Asia Society & Chinese Language Initiatives, Carl Falsgraf the Director of Center for Applied Second Language Studies, and Janine Erickson the President of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

The parallel session presentations ranged from individual papers, colloquia and posters. They all fell within the conference theme: "Towards a New Paradigm in LCTLs". Although, some focused on individual languages, they still addressed issues that clearly relate to more than just that language. The presentations addressed the link between language study and professionalization, curriculum and material development, methodology and other such topics including the use of technology in teaching languages.

The papers presented this year numbered 132 in total. The topics were interestingly delivered and included standards and assessment in LCTLs, corrective feedback, LCTLs and technology, 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), The Chinese and the Arabic groups held their meetings during the conference.

On Saturday, April 25, a banquet was held in honor of Michael Everson, winner of this year's A. Ronald Walton Award, which recognizes distinguished service in the field of LCTLs. In his acceptance speech, Richard reminisced and shared with the attendees, his long and distinguished career in service of

LCTLs. Tears of joy flowed when we all had to congratulate him in all the different languages present as directed by Professor Hong Gang Jin.

The excerpts from the evaluation received showed NCOLCTL conference as a forum for sharing successes and challenges in the field of LCTLs. Many attendees expressed gratitude for the chance to share information about professional issues in LCTLs. We are happy to realize our goal of increasing the collective impact of LCTL constituencies on America's ability to communicate with peoples from all parts of the world.

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 huge success notwithstanding. We would especially like to thank Florence Olamijulo, Adedoyin Ogunfeyimi, 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 13th NCOLCTL annual conference in 2010 at the Sheraton Madison Hotel Madison, Wisconsin.