Dear members and friends of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL),

On behalf of the NCOLCTL Executive Board, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to you at this year’s annual NCOLCTL conference. This year, we have received another record number of quality proposals. As a result, we are able to put together a very strong conference program in conjunction with the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA), the Council of Teachers of Southeast Asian Languages (COTSEAL), the South Asian Language Teachers (SALTA) and The Consortium for the Teaching of Indonesian and Malay (COTIM). This year’s conference promises to be a fruitful one. At the conference, you will hear 6 distinguished plenary speakers representing different languages and fields, enjoy 154 quality panels and papers, and also experience the warm atmosphere of our unique global village celebrating languages everywhere.

As this year’s conference theme indicates, NCOLCTL is setting out to achieve a goal of moving less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) to a new professional level. We believe this goal is highly necessary and important as our profession becomes more challenging and demanding and as our field is becoming increasingly more vital to the nation and to our future students. In order to develop and sustain our field, we need to constantly search for new ways to push the field to the next level of professionalism. How do we achieve this and where should we start? This brings me to the focal point of this message: the LCTL field and its professionalism.

In order to plan for a new professional level, we must establish a clear definition of the term professionalism and its related criteria and standards. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word professional refers to “a person relating to or belonging to a profession.” A professional is “a member of a vocation founded upon specialized educational training.” There is no doubt that LCTL education is a professional field. People who are practicing in this field must have specialized educational training. As LCTL professionals, what are our unique professional criteria and standards? Only when we know our field’s specific criteria and standards can we push the field to a new professional level. Obviously there are many different ways to professionalize a field. For this message, I will focus on the following three frequently cited criteria to help examine NCOLCTL’s professional achievements, challenges, and opportunities.

1. Developing expert and specialized knowledge in the field. The rapid growth and expansion of the LCTL field have placed challenging demands on its professionals...
to possess highly systematic and specialized knowledge, such as LCTL-related acquisition theories and best practices, and to take up leadership roles in the field. Over the years, NCOLCTL has done its best to deliver such needed expert and specialized knowledge. Our annual conferences, professional journals, and pre-conference workshops are great examples of our organization’s efforts to help its members become LCTL experts with specialized knowledge. In the next few years, I hope to see the NCOLCTL Board further advance the LCTL field by doing three things: first, tapping into its member organizations to establish a core LCTL expertise network by research areas and languages; second, forming specialized groups and launching research projects through LCTL-related empirical studies; and third, establishing and supporting LCTL-related online references and a research data bank. In addition, NCOLCTL can also make use of Web technology, such as webinars and wikis, to offer seminars and to disseminate LCTL-related research results to the field.

2. Promoting excellent practical skills in relation to the LCTL profession. Having excellent skills relating to the LCTL profession means knowing the best practices in the modern languages and LCTL teaching fields. Such knowledge will enable the teacher to identify the evidence of learning that will allow them to achieve desirable teaching outcomes. These practices require systematic mastery of pedagogical and instructional strategies, such as teaching in the target language; providing rich, elaborated, and comprehensible input; engaging in meaningful student-centered interaction; incorporating technology in teaching; and using effective and frequent assessments. In the past six years, NCOLCTL has made tremendous contributions in advancing LCTL professional skills by offering a variety of pre-conference workshops. The topics of these workshops have included national foreign language standards in the 21st century, backward design, task-based instruction, instructions in advanced proficiency levels, and assessment design and implementation. In the next few years, in order to help our members advance to a new professional level in LCTL skills, we need more member involvement in developing and promoting professional teaching practice standards in all LCTLS. I hope the Board will continue to make good use of its rich resources within our member organizations and collaborate with other experts to form task force committees on standards and offer pedagogical training workshops at the regional and national levels in addition to those given at the annual conference.

3. Encouraging high quality work in the field. Gilbert (1998) points out that high quality work in a profession is innovative, revolutionary, refreshing, and thoughtful in the form of creations, products, services, presentations, primary and other research, administrative, marketing, or other work endeavors. NCOLCTL’s achievements can be seen in several areas. First, NCOLCTL has expanded its journal publication. Due to an unprecedented volume of submissions for review, which resulted in 13 accepted articles totaling over 400 pages, the Board, upon recommendation from the Editor and Executive Director, has unanimously agreed to publish two issues of its journal a year. Second, NCOLCTL has experienced a surge in conference proposals. After reviewing the proposals, several conference committee members commented that the quality of proposals was substantially higher and that topics were much richer and wide-ranging this year. Third, this year, NCOLCTL, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin Language Center, launched its own online courses focusing on teaching methodology at the graduate level. In addition, NCOLCTL was awarded STARTALK funding to offer its first summer teacher development workshop for in-service and pre-service Swahili teachers. Finally, NCOLCTL is currently updating the navigation and functionality of its Web site. All of these efforts are strong indicators of upward movement in professionalism in our field. As I said in my message last year, only when a field generates its own research and service will the field survive and advance. I sincerely hope more and more members of NCOLCTL will join in LCTL-related work, including research on LCTL acquisition and the development of professional standards, LCTL-related pedagogical materials, and assessment tools.

In short, I believe the three areas mentioned above will help transform our field professionally. We have a higher duty to our field and our students. We must have the interest and the desire to accomplish our professional work and take pride in our efforts to benefit the LCTL profession. We must start from ourselves. For this reason, I strongly urge each and every one of you to come to the NCOLCTL annual conference and bring your friends and colleagues from different languages with you.

As the year of 2010 continues to unfold, my service as president of NCOLCTL will come to completion at the end of this conference. I have been privileged to serve on the Board of this distinguished and special organization. I am deeply awed by the commitment and professionalism that the NCOLCTL Executive Board and staff collectively demonstrate to accomplish important work in support of LCTL education. I sincerely hope this organization continues to grow and expand and to foster close interaction among its members and a shared sense of mission and solidarity for teaching LCTLS.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere thanks to the NCOLCTL members, the Executive Board, the Secretariat, and member organizations for allowing me these extraordinary years to explore new opportunities and meet new challenges. During the past four years as vice president and president of the Council, I have been fortunate to work with a group of extremely talented and dedicated individuals who have been most helpful to me in understanding the history and growth of the Council while achieving its objectives. I am deeply indebted to every one of you for your guidance and support.

With best wishes,

Hong Gang Jin, President, NCOLCTL, hjin@hamilton.edu

THE WEB AND LCTLs: FROM NOW ON LEARNING WILL BE DIFFERENT

With ease we all can predict that in the next decade much foreign language learning will become unbundled from the classroom. We have to ask what can be done online and what can be done asynchronously. The learners of today and tomorrow demand cyber-centric solutions and that places much pressure on us as “digital green card holders.”

This is the idea being pursued with the www.openlanguages.net initiative. The following languages are under development: Malinke (Guinea), Dagara (Ghana), Yoruba (Nigeria), Bemba (Zambia), Swahili (East Africa), Afrikaans (South Africa), and Korean (Korea). Hopefully in 2010-2011 Zulu (South Africa), Xhosa (South Africa), Finnish (Finland), and Cornish (Wales, UK) will be added.

Development of these sites is happening in three stages. The first (and current) stage is to develop quality reference materials to support language learning. The second phase is to replace the textbook with the online learning environment, and the third stage is to bring many campuses into the fold in a syndicated language learning space.

Stage one. In addition to having good audio and video tracks, animated GIFs, a carousel tool to help with vocabulary mastery, and an online community to help answer questions, we have to push the envelope to add a richness of interactivity at each point to empower learners. Currently a server-based asynchronous audio exchange engine is being added to enable pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and speaking practice. An online drill-and-practice tool is being added to do the “flashcard thing.”

Stage two. This phase represents a level of maturity of any given language when it becomes worthy textbook-and-learning environments. This will include social networking communities where experts and beginners work together.

Stage three. This will occur when the tools and record keeping for a specific language have matured to address the foreign language instructional and record keeping needs of multiple institutions. Achieving this grand goal would mean that languages like Swahili or Bulgarian could be taken at different colleges, but all the students would become part of the same cohort of learners in the same online learning environment.

We live in exciting times. The road is wide open to explore new ways to learn-- with cell phones, iPads, on the Web, and with other digital devices forces us to reflect on how the same objectives can be achieved differently. Text, audio, and video communication is becoming commonplace. With new thinking we can change our paradigm from fighting for our fair piece of the pie, to collaborating to expand the pie with greater opportunity for all. Finally, we will be able to give endangered languages access to the world of language teaching and learning.

Dr. Jacques du Plessis
University of Wisconsin (UWM)

NEWS OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE FIELD

The Alliance of Associations of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ), the umbrella professional organization for the Japanese language education field (and organizational member of NCOLCTL), marked several milestones in 2009.

On the tenth anniversary of its establishment, the Alliance received a major award from the Japan Foundation, which promotes Japanese language and culture education worldwide; made new strides in its program of on- and off-line professional development for teachers; and took steps toward a consolidation and reorganization of its constituent organizations into a single entity.

The Japan Foundation presents several awards annually, to individuals and organizations that have contributed to cultural, academic, and professional exchange with and understanding of Japan around the world. Previous recipients of the Japan Foundation Award include conductor Seiji Ozawa, film directors Akira Kurosawa and Hayao Miyazaki, the Japan Society of the United States, and many individual historians and scholars. In 2009, one of three awards was presented “in recognition of the major contribution the AATJ has made to the promotion and development of Japanese language teaching in elementary, secondary, and higher education across the United States, by coordinating organizations of Japanese language teachers and disseminating information on Japanese language education.” In addition to recognition at an awards ceremony in Tokyo on October 6, 2009, the Japan Foundation Award includes a prize of 3 million yen (about $32,000). These funds will be used to promote Japanese language education.
in the United States, to underwrite AATJ activities that assist teachers, and to support the consolidation and streamlining of the professional organizations in the Japanese language field.

AATJ’s online professional development program for teachers of Japanese, JOINT (Japanese Online Instruction Network for Teachers) advanced significantly in 2009. Two courses, Content Based Instruction and Teaching Advanced High School Japanese, were offered, and a course on Teaching Advanced Reading Skills will be offered in spring 2010. In addition, two facilitator training workshops were conducted to develop new courses and train instructors for them. Courses to be developed and offered in 2010–2011 include Basics of Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language, Teaching Business Japanese, Teaching Culture in the Language Classroom, and Technology in the Japanese Language Classroom. AATJ also hopes to conduct (under license) one of the courses that NCOLCTL has developed, Foreign Language Teaching in the US Education Environment.

AATJ also will conduct a summer institute in Japan, “Incorporating Culture in the Japanese Language Classroom,” during summer 2010. Twenty language teachers at all levels of instruction will spend one month in Japan collecting authentic materials; visiting schools, museums, theaters, and other cultural sites; meeting and learning from experts in various aspects of Japan’s contemporary and traditional culture; and receiving training in developing classroom units that incorporate these ideas and materials into language teaching.

Building on the ten years during which AATJ has been a unifying force for the leaders and members of two distinct organizations of Japanese language teachers, ATJ (Association of Teachers of Japanese, primarily for college-level instructors) and NCJLT (National Council of Japanese Language Teachers, whose members teach predominantly at the pre-college level), the leadership of all three organizations have agreed in principle to consolidating into a single organization for the Japanese language profession. General discussions have begun, and detailed discussions and work toward a merger will begin in February 2010, with the goal of consolidating into a new organization in 2011.

Individually, ATJ and NCJLT have continued their activities that build communities of Japanese language teachers. ATJ will hold its annual conference in Philadelphia in March 2010, in conjunction with the Association for Japanese Studies: the program will feature more than 85 presentations and panels over a three-day period. ATJ’s award-winning journal, Japanese Language and Literature, published a record number of pages in 2009, and recent special issues have included one on Japanese language pedagogy and one on language acquisition during study abroad. ATJ administers the Bridging Scholarship program for undergraduate students studying abroad in Japan: this program, with the strong fundraising and administrative support of the Japan-United States Friendship Commission, has awarded scholarships to more than 950 students since 1999.

NCJLT sponsors two annual contests for student artwork in the form of traditional New Year cards (nengajo) and manga comics. It named two Teachers of the Year at its annual meeting in November 2009 in San Diego, during the annual conference of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL): Satoru Shinagawa (Kapiolani Community College, Honolulu, HI) and Taeko Tashibu (Roosevelt High School, Seattle, WA). At the ACTFL conference, NCJLT sponsored 23 sessions on Japanese language education, with some of them focusing on advocacy and program development as well as on classroom practices and professional development.

More than 2,000 high school students took the College Board’s Advanced Placement® Japanese Language and Culture Exam in May 2009, the third year the exam was offered. Much professional development activity in Japanese language education continues to focus on training high school students for this exam and working toward smooth articulation of students who have taken the exam into college courses.

With the continued existence of some public-school programs (including at least one historic Japanese elementary school immersion program) threatened, Japanese language educators are renewing their efforts to advocate for their programs and their subject, especially at the K-12 level. Enrollments at the college level continue to grow, and interest in study abroad in Japan has never been higher.

We applaud the energy and enthusiasm of Japanese language teachers and learners as a new decade begins!

Susan Schmidt
Executive Director, AATJ
ONLINE CHINESE TEST IN FOUR SKILLS NOW AVAILABLE

The Center for Applied Second Language Studies (CASLS) is proud to announce the Chinese Computerized Assessment of Proficiency (CAP). CAP is a proficiency-oriented test intended to gauge students’ capacity for conveying and comprehending meaningful language content in realistic situations. Results from CAP can be used by students and teachers to evaluate progress towards language learning goals and, in conjunction with other sources of information, help inform placement decisions and evaluations. At the class level, aggregate information can help inform curricular decisions for program administrators.

Funded in part by The Language Flagship, Chinese CAP is an online Mandarin Chinese assessment that covers a proficiency range comparable to American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Novice through Advanced in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The reading section is available in both traditional and simplified character versions. This test builds on the style and format of the Chinese Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) test created previously at CASLS. The CAP project introduces a listening section, items targeting higher proficiency levels, and a new delivery algorithm.

CASLS relied on native speakers and language testing experts to develop the test. Native Chinese speakers identified or constructed reading and listening passages, and CASLS staff wrote test items according to task specifications. A group consisting of Dr. Jennifer Liu (University of Indiana), Dr. Vivian Ling (Oberlin College), Adam Ross (Lakeside School, Washington), Dr. Matthew Christensen (Brigham Young University), and David “Kojo” Hakam (Portland Public Schools) reviewed all of the test items. These reviewers expressed general satisfaction with the test items, and there was a high correlation (r = .87) between the items’ intended proficiency target level and the expert reviewers’ ratings. CASLS included only the best items in the test.

More than 1,000 learners in programs across the country participated in pilot testing. These learners represented the gamut of ability levels, from beginning to advanced. Analysis of the pilot data showed reliabilities of .95 and .92 for the listening and reading section, respectively. Cut scores for the major proficiency levels were determined, and a subset of piloted items was prepared for multistage adaptive delivery. Simulation studies of the delivery algorithm show a correlation of r = .97 between simulated test taker ability and final ability estimate on the operational version of the test.

CASLS is currently offering Chinese CAP to teachers, districts, and language program free of charge for no- and low-stakes uses. The test system automatically scores the reading and listening sections, and these scores are available within twenty-four hours of the test.

Although the system does not score speaking and writing sections, language educators can rate these sections themselves using the simple rubric provided. To register for the test or for additional technical details, visit http://casls.uoregon.edu/pilot.php.

Situation:
You were reading a newspaper in Chinese when you saw the following paragraph:

CAP helps teachers find out what students can do with the language in realistic situations.
Changing Times for the Study of Heritage Languages in the United States

Past Scenario

In the past, immigrants’ heritage languages have seldom survived in this country. Many immigrants who fled political, religious, or economic persecution in their motherlands did not want to think about their material and non-material cultural baggage and wanted to start a new life in the United States. The American culture and the English language proved a highly attractive choice to them, and, by and large, newcomers in the United States were drawn to it strongly. Those who wanted to save their languages and cultures rarely succeeded because the central pull of American culture, particularly the quest for material success, was so powerful that it dominated their minds. For one and all, the American dream was supreme and the American way of life was the sole way of achieving their goals. America became a melting pot in which most immigrants shed their distinctive characteristics, including their heritage language.

Changing Times

Times are changing. Over the last few decades, the metaphor has changed from a melting pot to a salad bowl. There is a new vision of a composite culture in which immigrant groups assimilate into the host society but maintain the positive aspects of their cultural background and enrich the tapestry of American culture. Immigrant groups that let their heritage languages go in the past are being encouraged to pass them on to the next generations. Parents have before them new choices for their children’s future. Funds are being made available for running summer school programs in their native languages. Public and private schools are gradually introducing heritage languages in their foreign language curricula. There is increasing realization that heritage languages are a national resource. One giant step in this direction has been taken by the federal government of the United States. President George W. Bush announced the National Security Language Initiative on January 5, 2006. Under this plan, the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland is administering StarTalk programs all over the nation. The program supports with federal funds many less commonly taught languages that are critical to the needs of the United States. Knowledge of a second language contributes to both the personal development of youngsters and the national good.

Community Building for Heritage Language Revitalization

The current environment of federal support and the possibility of introducing Hindi and other less commonly taught languages in the formal foreign language curriculum of public schools is an unprecedented opportunity in this country. Research shows that we need to work systematically to increase people’s motivation to preserve and advance heritage languages. The biggest challenge in this respect is building communities in which to do so.

Parents need to realize that exposing their children to their heritage language at home is a relatively effortless endeavor. Learning another language in a classroom setting can be both painful and less rewarding as children learn and command languages better and more easily in natural environments. Parents need to be made aware of this. Through the use of the language at home in natural settings, they can help their children become bilingual.

Some mistakenly believe that multilingualism is not healthy for the intellectual development of their children. In fact, children are neurologically equipped to know multiple languages without any impairment to their principal language. Research corroborates the fact that knowledge of a second language is no threat to one’s principal language, which in the American context is English. Rather it helps the learner to expand his or her worldview and overall capacities for success in life.

To alleviate incorrect perceptions of multilingualism, we need to educate parents about its benefits. We need advocacy groups that will pool information and share it with community members through local newspapers, town meetings, local organizations, and electronic media. Building a community is energizing a large group of individuals with shared ideas and common goals. It is important for organizers and leaders in the heritage language community to have access to in-depth information on various aspects of the issue in hand, limitless patience and interest in listening to others, and the knack of presenting their own well-prepared points of view. This is the way to create sustainable heritage language communities. Such efforts at the grassroots level should bring about the kind of social change we need. It may be a slow process, but it should work.

Learning Indic Languages in the United States

Opportunities to learn Indic languages in the United States are increasing. Community schools for teaching Hindi and other Indic languages are constantly grow-
ing in numbers. Thousands of parents find time to take their children to weekend schools, such as those organized by HindiUSA (www.hindiusa.com), to learn the language and culture in which they think their values are enshrined.

StarTalk summer school programs have multiplied. Under the auspices of a newly constituted organization, Yuva Hindi Sansthan (YHS) (www.yuvahindisansthan.com), a StarTalk Hindi language camp will take place in Atlanta, Georgia, during summer 2010. One hundred middle school students will participate and learn Hindi through various cultural activities. Such efforts are likely to multiply in the coming years.

The number of colleges and universities that offer courses in Indic languages is increasing every year. The Flagship program in Hindi and Urdu at the University of Texas at Austin is leading the national effort to produce bilingual and bicultural professionals for the coming decades. Two teacher-training institutes for members of the teaching community at all levels will be held at the University of Pennsylvania and at New York University. Many other student programs are scheduled in New Jersey, New York, Texas, Ohio, California and many other states. Indubitably, these are unprecedented opportunities for revitalizing and advancing languages like Hindi as well as other less commonly taught languages in the United States.

This is a YHS community awareness meeting held on March 21 in Mountainside, NJ. On behalf of New Jersey Assembly, Deputy Speaker Upendra Chivukula presented a proclamation supporting the mission of Yuva Hindi Sansthan.

Surendra Gambhir
University of Pennsylvania

The LCTL project at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) is the only US Department of Education-sponsored Language Resource Center devoted to encouraging good teaching and learning of all LCTLs and critical languages; other LRCs focus on a particular language or language group.

The project’s popular searchable database of where LCTLs are taught in North America (http://carla.umn.edu/lctl/db) has been redesigned. Currently, we have more than 500 LCTLs and dialects on the database, ranging from Acholi to Zulu. Users now have the option of searching for more precise information like specific emphasis of the course, consortia memberships or frequency the course is offered. After the search, all records that match the criteria will be displayed in a table, with a summary of language, teaching institution, city and state, levels taught, type of course (summer, K-12, etc.) and special affiliation. This will allow a more efficient overview of found courses.

During winter 2010, we contacted all programs listed on the database and asked for updates and corrections. Our return rate was a fairly large 10%. E-mail addresses that bounced were removed from the database. In our on-going attempt at keeping the information up-to-date, we are currently checking and adding URLs for the programs we list. We urge all program teachers or administrators to continue to inform us of corrections or updates to the data we currently have. It is easy to submit new courses or change what we have on the searchable pages.

Several new items have been submitted to our Virtual Audio-Video Archive (http://www.carla.umn.edu/lctl/VAVA/) and we always welcome sharable royalty-free lessons or clips to the collections.

A reminder: the CARLA summer institutes include several specifically for LCTL teachers. Unfortunately the deadline for LCTL stipends has passed. See (http://www.carla.umn.edu/institutes/2010/schedule.html) for details.

Louis Janus, Ph.D.
Coordinator, LCTL project / CARLA / U of Minnesota
AATP is a national organization devoted to promoting the study of Persian language, literature and culture in North America. AATP facilitates professional development, fosters excellence in teaching, and creates opportunities in finding resources for the study of the Persianate World.

According to the most recent Modern Language Association (MLA) report entitled “Enrollments in Languages Other than English in the United States Institutions of Higher Education,” there were 2,037 students of Persian in Fall 2006 in the United States. This is an increase of 82.4% since 2002. In order to address this relatively sudden increase in enrollment, AATP has increased its overall activities, especially in the field of teacher training.

In 2008, AATP organized a successful workshop during the MESA conference in Washington D.C., led by Professor Soheila Amir-Soleimani. This full day Persian teaching workshop offered various presentations on best practices in teaching Persian. Various members and officers of AATP presented during this workshop.

In the summer of 2009, under the auspices of a STARTALK grant administered by the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), Persian teachers organized their first workshop on curriculum design and materials development at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. During the course of the workshop, 20 Persian teachers from various academic institutions, mainly from the North East, gathered to discuss issues and brainstorm ways to collaborate on materials development. In a follow-up workshop, a session exclusively on Second Life and the teaching of Persian in a virtual world environment was held.

In February 2010, AATP, together with the National Middle Eastern Language Resource Center (NMELRC) and STARTALK, organized a workshop devoted to Persian materials development. At the end of the workshop, the NMELRC provided all 20 participants a certificate.

In the past two years, AATP has also recognized those who have devoted their lives to the teaching of Persian language, literature and culture. The first recipient of the AATP award was Manouchehr Kasheff (Emeritus, Columbia University). A reception was held in his honor immediately following the AATP workshop at the MESA conference in November 2008. The following year, Wheeler Thackston (Emeritus, Harvard University) was honored in a joint reception with the International Society for Iranian Studies (ISIS). Over 200 participants attended this event, which took place during the 2009 MESA meeting in Boston, MA.

One of the main topics of discussion during the preceding workshops was how to integrate technology into the teaching of Persian. Thus far, there is an online YouTube channel for Persian video clips, which provides transcriptions for selected clips and instructional questions.

There is also a virtual site called “Persian Courtyard,” which is built on UPenn’s Second Life Land. In the past year, AATP has also revamped its website. Its new address is: www.aatpersian.org.

Future Plans:

- AATP will facilitate a roundtable discussion on national standard guidelines for Persian during the ISIS conference in Los Angeles (May 27-30, 2010).
- AATP plans to offer monetary awards to students of Persian.
- AATP will coordinate with the STARTALK program to conduct a Persian professional development workshop in July 2010 at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (directed by Pardis Minuchehr).
- AATP has started a social networking Facebook site for the exchange of ideas, and plans to set up a NING site as well.

Pardis Minuchehr (University of Pennsylvania) President, AATP

NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SLAVIC AND EAST EUROPEAN LANGUAGES (AATSEEL)

AATSEEL instituted a new program of Master Classes at its 2009 annual conference. Taught by leading scholars on topics of broad interest to the organization’s membership, the Master Classes are limited to 15-20 participants to allow for questions and discussion.

Professor Caryl Emerson of Princeton University led the inaugural Master Class on “Tools for Teaching the Post-Boom Bakhtin—as Philosopher, Carnivalist, Post-Modernist, Formalist, and ‘Dialogic Classic’,” which provided an exciting opportunity to learn about Bakhtin, his theories, and their application in the classroom. At the organization’s next conference in January 2011, AATSEEL will sponsor two more Master Classes with the same format. Professor William Mills Todd
Joshua Fishman, a well known sociolinguist and professor emeritus at Yeshiva University, began in the 1960s to advocate for preserving heritage languages in the United States and internationally. He continues to promote the cause of language preservation.

Dr. Fishman was unable to attend the conference, but he spoke by telephone to NHLRC, and his comments were included in the introduction to the award. He had this to say about the term heritage language: “In the early 60s the general term for this whole area was foreign languages—foreign language instruction, foreign language schools, foreign language radio programs—and I tried to get away from the ‘foreign’ because it didn't fit well into my notion that these were all American languages. The best I could come up with at the time, not being very good at inventing terms, was ‘non-English languages’... And that’s not nearly as euphonious, it’s not as catchy, it doesn’t imply the kind of facilitative emotional attachment that ‘heritage’ does. Heritage is a term that involves your inheritance, something that you have thanks to the kindness of your ancestors. It involves personal, intergenerational ties. That’s a very good term to have.”

You can read the complete interview with Dr. Fishman at [http://www.international.ucla.edu/languages/nhlrc/](http://www.international.ucla.edu/languages/nhlrc/).

One topic of discussion at the conference was the definition of heritage and community languages and particularly the use of the term non-English language used in some papers by US scholars. Although Valdés qualifies her definition as applying to a US context, the objection by international participants is worthy of note. While the situations with heritage/community languages differ depending on the country, there are also many commonalities in our research agendas and approaches to education. It would certainly be more helpful to use a term that would describe minority languages in relation to the dominant language rather than...
heritage languages in relation to English.

The conference panels lasted two full days, with 10 or 11 sessions running concurrently.

The last day of the conference, Sunday, February 21, was dedicated to workshops. Close to 100 people attended a highly interactive workshop, “An Ecological Perspective for a Standard-based Approach to HL Development,” led by Dr. Shuhan Wang of the National Foreign Language Center. Language-specific workshops followed on Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Persian, Russian, and Spanish. The workshops encouraged an exchange of ideas on best practices and language-specific issues in heritage language teaching. We are truly grateful to the workshop leaders: Iman Hashem (CalState Long Beach and Occidental College), Lin Domizio (CalState San Francisco), Namhee Lee (CalState Los Angeles), Saied Atoofi (UCLA), Joan Chevalier (United States Naval Academy), Marina Niznik (Tel Aviv University, Israel), Kim Potowski (University of Illinois, Chicago), and Ana Roca (Florida International University).

The conference was one of the projects of the NHLRC’s four-year grant cycle. It showed us commonalities and differences in approaches to heritage language research and education around the world, and it made the field seem less parochial and more inclusive. Many participants asked us whether we planned to hold another conference next year. We hope to convene our second international conference soon, but the question is when. We will definitely hold one in 2014.

If you participated in the conference, please remember that the Heritage Language Journal will publish one or more issues devoted to proceedings. A site to submit your paper will be open on the NHLRC website (www.nhlrc.ucla.edu) in July 2010.

Olga Kagan and Susan Bauckus
UCLA, National Heritage Language Resource Center (NHLRC)

The National Heritage Language Resource Center, funded by the Department of Education’s Title VI, was established in 2006 as a joint project of the UCLA Center for World Languages and the UC Consortium for Language Learning and Teaching. The Center’s mission is to improve heritage language education. The need for theory, materials, practices, and teacher education for this field is essential to education in the United States, given that nearly 20 percent of US residents speak a language other than English at home.

ANNOUNCING THE 2010 CONFERENCE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CELTIC LANGUAGE TEACHERS (NAACL'T)

“Hands Across the Celtic Isles of Language”

Like the Scottish Isles, the various Celtic communities are geographically separated from one another but are increasingly reaching out to share strategies, success stories, advice, and friendship. Encouraging and fostering Celtic interconnectedness is an important part of NAACL'T’s mission.

The conference will be held June 9-12, 2010, at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, a Scottish Gaelic medium college located on the Isle of Skye in northwest Scotland (http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/beurla/).

The keynote speakers will be Caoimhín Ó Donnabháin (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig) and Mairead Dhòmhnallach (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig).

We are now accepting abstracts for twenty-minute talks in any of the following areas:
• Methods, techniques, and best practices in teaching Celtic languages
• Incorporating Celtic cultures into the classroom or learning experience
• Application of computer technology to Celtic language teaching or research
• Pedagogical materials: what works, what doesn’t
• Topics in Celtic linguistics, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition
• Language policy and planning in the Celtic world
• Promotion or appreciation of Celtic languages and cultures

Please send abstracts of between 200-300 words to Kevin Rottet (krottet@indiana.edu) by April 25, 2010.

We offer a $100 scholarship for financial assistance to partially offset the cost of attending the conference. If you are interested in presenting a paper and would benefit from this modest scholarship, simply indicate on your registration form that you would like to be considered for the scholarship.

More information about NAACL'T and sample programs from previous conferences can be found on our Web site (www.naaclt.org).
The 2010 A. Ronald Walton Award

The officers of NCOLCTL are proud to announce that Antonia Folarin Schleicher is the 2010 recipient of the A. Ronald Walton Award, joining a distinguished group of scholars, teachers, and leaders who have been recognized for outstanding service in the field of Less Commonly Taught Languages. The award was established to honor the late Dr. Ron Walton, co-founder of NCOLCTL and founding Deputy Director of the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC). The award was first presented in the year 2000, to Dr. James Alatis. Subsequent recipients are Teresita Ramos (2001), Richard D. Brecht (2002), Laura Janda (2003), Laurel Rasplica Rodd (2004), Dora E. Johnson (2005), Ray T. Clifford and Leonard A. Polakiewicz (2006), Thomas J. Hinnebusch (2007), Erika H. Gilson (2008) and Michael E. Everson (2009).

Antonia Schleicher earned her Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Kansas, Lawrence. Within the UW-Madison Department of African Languages and Literature she has taught African linguistics, Yoruba language and culture at all levels, as well as Yoruba life and civilization. Her major linguistics research areas have been in the interface between phonology and morphology, and in experimental phonetics. In addition, her interests in foreign language learning and teaching led her into doing research in second language acquisition leading to a new course for graduate students titled “African Language Teaching Methods: Research and Practice.”

Her main area of research in second language acquisition is in the role of culture in foreign language learning. Using examples from different aspects of Yoruba culture, she seeks to show how crucial cultural contexts are in foreign language acquisition, and how use of a language out of its appropriate cultural contexts can lead to significant miscommunication.

Her research in the intersection of language and culture also led her to explore ways of bringing foreign culture to students in their learning environment through multimedia technology. As a result, she developed an interactive, multimedia CD-ROM for learning Yoruba language and culture. This CD-ROM, which accompanies her book Jẹ́ Ḱ Á Ka Yorùbá (Yale University Press, 1993) now serves as a model for other less commonly taught languages. She continues to research the use of technology in language acquisition.

Dr. Schleicher is the former president of the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA) and the current Executive Director of the National Council of Organizations of the Less Commonly Taught Languages. She is also a former program chair of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Teaching Academy.

In a phone interview, Antonia shared some of her thoughts about her experiences in the field and insights that she could share:

1. You have been involved in NCOLCTL, ALTA and other organizations and academic journals in your career. Do you believe that such service to the profession is important for a career in the LCTLs? How has it been personally rewarding?

Absolutely! Getting involved in field-building is important for our profession. I’m happy I began early in my professional life. I remember my first meeting with ALTA at the very beginning of that association, which wasn’t nearly so organized back then. I thought I wuld just go to get to know people in the field, get involved with my language -- Yoruba -- to see how the whole field had grown, what I could contribute. I remember the president announced that he was stepping down to accept a Fulbright opportunity for study in Africa, so now the vice president was automatically the president. Because they had an unexpected vacancy for vice president, I was nominated as Vice President. It felt very fast at the time, but it enabled me to see the field less as a disjointed organization. I served as Vice President to Lioba Mioshe, who is a dynamic leader who pulled me along. It was an amazing experience to see myself develop professionally and to see the [African languages] field growing and expanding and being able to compete with the so-called “big languages” – then of course two or three years later I became president and thus represented ALTA to NCOLCTL. … It was about 1990 that I became involved in representing ALTA. Joining NCOLCTL, watching what was going on in SALTA, COTSEAL; then CLASS petitioned to join… watching the process of forming organizations, supported by NCOLCTL to become a full-fledged organization, just watching all the processes was extremely profitable for me. It helped
me to be able to learn about the common problems that the LCTL language groups were facing and how NCOLCTL as an umbrella organization was trying to assist fledgling orgs. NCOLCTL would give small grants to new organizations trying to establish themselves. ALTA was given 12 or 15 thousand dollars: you can’t imagine how much we achieved just from that grant. The biggest impact on ALTA was that it got all of us from all these languages, Yoruba, Wolof, Zulu… to start talking, having workshops, meeting, talking about issues with materials development, technology…issues with professional development, how to train our instructors … the fact that we’re constantly having “itinerant workers” so to speak – how to make sure people get proper training to be able to continue. Such an amazing background. By the time I became Vice President of NCOLCTL and later President, I knew exactly what the issues were – I knew the kinds of questions to ask. Years as a delegate assembly member had prepared me well.

2. How does your methods course differ from ESL or CTLs?

My students often ask this question: why do we need a separate course? Sometimes I create a role-play with the dean of the college or a committee from the “big languages,” French, German, Spanish, and then these African lang programs, and have “committee members” ask for explanation. The fact is that this course specifically addresses issues related to African languages and cultures. Many instructors with an ESL background can’t teach an African Language that they speak natively. They need to understand how to apply principles of language acquisition to a language that they themselves speak but never learned as a foreign language.

In addition, resources for teaching ESL are extremely rich, whereas for African languages, all you have is a grammar textbook written in 1935! We found out in a survey of materials that the majority of materials were developed long ago. So first, you don’t have the materials. We talk about materials development, but before that, the materials you have are not at all communicative. How can you do that without a textbook to guide you, how will you structure the course in such a way that you don’t turn it into a linguistic analysis course? …Also the issue of culture: how do you bring the foreign language into the social studies course, when you spend time on women studies, or Yoruba society? When we teach African languages, for the most part we are teaching “truly foreign languages” as Eleanor Jordan said. There are no cognates: even borrowings sound so different to American students that they wouldn’t recognize it as a borrowing, e.g. ofizi (office). The issue of “truly foreign” is so critical. Teaching ESL to Africans is so different from teaching African languages in the US because most Africans hear English around them. It’s not like learning Yoruba in Wisconsin.

Teaching LCTLs is not something where you can just apply your ESL methods. It’s true that there are theoretical methods you can apply, but then there are so many issues that are critical for an African language instructor …

3. What Advice to language program planners or to supervisors of language instructors?

I always tell people who are thinking of starting a language program: they need someone who is knowledgeable in the field, who has lot of experience in the African languages field to do a workshop for them. Before, people would get anyone, the wife of a professor who speaks Wolof… or has two or three other jobs; no training, no background in teaching; no understanding of what the issues in language program development are. Programs like that don’t succeed, and will be complaining that they have no students. They were probably not even paying the person well, as a cheap way of starting a program.

Also, first they have to ask themselves what kind of model, what kind of program. Five-star, four-star, three star, one-star. If you want a five-star program, these are the issues to consider: can you get a tenure track position for that language? You need someone who is dedicated, professionally committed to the program – who won’t see this as something on the side. Even if not tenure track, at least get a full-time lecturer. Personnel is very critical. If you use “itinerant workers,” you get what you pay for. Many African language programs are closing because of this problem. The model of a professor of Linguistics analyzing the language and working with the native speaker who works at McDonald’s is a model that should be dead.

A program director also needs to make sure the new faculty person attends a professional development workshop on African languages: – any Language Resource Center does that now, Startalk, etc., -- there are so many professional development programs out there that LCTL instructors can take advantage of. So training is necessary even if the individual is a PhD, or a native speaker. He or she must be trained to teach the language as a foreign language. Then hopefully the person will learn about curriculum development – we are pushing for “backward design.”
– then address the issue of materials development. African languages have many materials for the major languages for beginner level at least. Plans are underway for developing materials for intermediate and advanced levels. … oh, also be sure that professional development is not just a one-time thing: you need to encourage staff to continue participating. Train the trainer workshops are important because one may be asked to direct all the languages in their program. Faculty also need to be sure they continue to educate themselves in their own language, because language and culture are dynamic. They need to visit the old country if possible, although it’s true a lot is available through the web, now … news and television and radio programs – still, it’s an advantage to go there and see how people interact.

4. What’s your advice to someone considering a major in the LCTLs?

Right now, there’s I an amazing opportunity for someone to work in the LCTLs, especially with the kinds of needs that we see at the governmental level, even the non-governmental sector. Demand for LCTLs is very high. I tell people who want to study Yoruba to ask themselves: “What will I do with it?” Don’t think of yourself as being a Yoruba major. If you have a less commonly-taught language on your CV, it says you understand a less commonly-taught language and culture to a certain level; it makes you unique if you are an American, puts you in a position where many Americans cannot be – an opportunity that many Americans don’t have access to. You may get a job because you are globally competent: your employer will think that if you can learn this language, you’ll be able to relate, to pick up local language because you already have a background in a LCTL. None of the CTLs are “truly foreign,” but when you talk of the LCTLs there are very few Americans proficient at a professional level. I always say, “Go for it.”

Get to know how people that are very foreign to America think, function – prepares you to function in that very different cultural setting. It’s an amazing tool – more powerful when you are put in a position to use it professionally, like one Swahili student who is now a diplomat in Tanzania. I’m sure when she was learning it she never thought she would end up in Tanzania as a diplomat. LCTLs OPEN DOORS FOR YOU!

Thank you, Antonia, and congratulations!

Catherine Ingold

FROM THE SECRETARIAT DESK

This year, NCOLCTL marks its 20th year as an organization. We continue to be a growing and changing organization and can take pride in all our great achievements of the past and continue to look forward to all the promise that tomorrow holds. From all our pioneer founding veterans who steered the organization through its early years, to all the visionaries of past Executive Boards, who contributed immensely to the leadership of NCOLCTL, we can draw inspiration to continue our mission and endeavors to promote and teach the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs).

We continue to be grateful to the Dean of International Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Gilles Bousquet, for his continued generous support of NCOLCTL and the numerous Title VI Area Studies centers on the UW campus that have contributed and enabled NCOLCTL to once again successfully host this past year’s conference.

This year has seen tremendous growth for the Journal of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (JNCOLTL) with the release of two volumes of the Journal earmarked for this year. The current copy, available during the 2010 Conference is Volume 7, Fall 2009 edition and it features six excellent papers dealing with methodological and technological issues in teaching less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). This current edition is available to all our members and I do urge you to get your copy. The second release of JNCOLCTL consisting of seven papers dealing with practical issues in teaching a wide range of less commonly taught languages (LCTL’s) is Volume 8, Spring, 2010 edition. This edition is currently in the final production stages and should be available to our members not long after the conference. I would like to take this opportunity to express the Secretariat’s great appreciation to Dr. Danko Sipka, our Journal’s editor, and for all his professionalism and timely efforts to oversee the production of these journals.

We extend our sincere thanks to Dr. Catherine Ingold for successfully producing the NCOLCTL Bulletin which continues to grow and get better. So much work and effort go into the production of this publication and we do want to extend our gratitude also to Dr. Ingold’s staff for all their dedication and work on the bulletin.

This past year, (Summer 2009), saw the launching
of the National Online LCTL Teacher Training Initiative. This was a collaborative project between the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Language Institute (LI). This course is delivered as a “Non-Credit, independent course” for members of NCOLCTL.

NCOLCTL members can work through the material independently, without receiving any university credit. This online course will support professional development opportunities, as well as promote the teaching and learning of less commonly taught language instructors nationally.

The summer of 2009 also saw NCOLCTL organize the STARTALK Summer Swahili Professional Development Program. This event, sponsored by STARTALK, was a hands-on training of prospective and new teachers of Swahili at the post secondary level. Participants had hands-on training in the implementation of standards-based curriculum and instruction, backward curriculum design model and the communicative approach.

At the 2009 conference, a new committee was instituted during the Delegate Assembly whose mandate was to oversee the revamping of the Councilnet website. Today, we are proud at the Secretariat to have the responsibility of maintaining and updating a very vibrant and attractive website. Our gratitude goes to the Website Committee: Erlin Barnard (Chair), Dianna Murphy and Jacques du Plessis who came up with a website that we all can be proud of.

The success of the Organization continues to have a great deal to do with the collaborative spirit of the NCOLCTL Executive Board. I would like to thank Gautami Shah (Immediate Past President), Hong Gang Jin, (President), Catherine Ingold (Vice President), Susan Schmidt (Secretary/Treasurer), Erlin Barnard (Member-at-Large) and Eva Prionas (Member-at-Large) for their hard work and leadership. Hong Gang Jin will be stepping down as President and Catherine Ingold will be stepping in at the end of this year’s conference.

Best wishes to you all in 2010 and it is our hope that NCOLCTL has been able to help you achieve your professional goals in the LCTLs. Please contact us any time you have questions about the organization or about our field. Let us continue to work together towards being the preeminent LCTLs organization.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in April, 2010!

Antonia Folarin Schleicher
Executive Director, NCOLCTL
Upcoming Events, Summer Institutes and Workshops

Upcoming Events:

April 23-25, 2010
National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages
13th International Conference
“Moving LCLTs to a New Professional Level”
- Madison, Wisconsin

May 8-9, 2010
Princeton University
Princeton Japanese Pedagogy Forum
“Innovative Ways of Teaching Kanji – Memory, Meaning, and Method”
- Princeton, New Jersey

May 8-9, 2010
Association of Teachers of Japanese
25th Conference of the Southeastern Association of Teachers of Japanese
- Durham, North Carolina

June 8-12, 2010
Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium
Annual Conference, “Enhancing Language Learning: Research, Innovation and Evaluation in CALL”
- Amherst, Massachusetts
- https://calico.org/page.php?id=405

June 9-12, 2010
North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers (NAACLT)
2010 Conference
- Island of Sky, Scotland

June 21-25, 2010
National Heritage Language Resource Center
Fourth Summer Heritage Research Institute:
Heritage Speakers: Linguistics and Pedagogy
- Manoa, Hawaii
- http://www.international.ucla.edu/languages/nhlcrc/2010summer/

June 24-26, 2010
American Association of Teachers of Korean
The 15th Annual Conference & Workshop
“Reconceptualizing Korean Teaching: Blueprints for Program Development from K to 16 and Beyond”
- St. Louis, MO
- http://eastasian.artsci.wustl.edu/AATK

July 6-8, 2010
National Association of Professors of Hebrew
2010 International Conference on Hebrew language, literature, and culture
- New York City, New York
- http://vanhise.lss.wisc.edu/naph/?q=node/5

November 19-21, 2010
(In conjunction with ACTFL conference)
Chinese Language Teachers Association
2010 Chinese Language Teachers Association Annual Meeting
- Boston, Massachusetts
- http://clta-us.org/meeting.htm#annualMeeting

November 19-21, 2010
(Pre-convention: November 18th)
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Annual Convention and World Languages Expo
- Boston, Massachusetts

January 6-11, 2011
American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages
Annual AASTEEL Conference
- Pasadena, CA
- http://www.aatseel.org/program
NCOLCTL has a new website!!

HTTP://WWW.NCOLCTL.ORG
NCOLCTL EXECUTIVE BOARD

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Membership Form - NCOLCTL

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

LCTL Field of focus:

Last Name:

First Name:

E-Mail Address:

Title:

Institution:

Street Address 1:

Street Address 2:

City, State:

Zip Code

Phone Number:

FAX Number:

Benefits of Membership
- A free annual pre-conference workshop (normally the cost of a workshop can be up to $150.)
- A free conference proceedings or journal and a bulletin
- Reduced registration fees at the conference
- Representation at the national level as “at-large” member of the board, elected by the individual members.
- Participation in the Council’s projects.
- Membership in the Council ListServe.

Please complete and submit the following application form with your membership fee ($50 - for “regular” individual membership, $30 for students/seniors). Checks can be written to “NCOLCTL.” Mail all materials to the following address.

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