Dear Colleagues,

This year has been an eventful year for language education in the US, and admittedly, many of the events have been negative. With dramatic cuts to funding of world language programs (notably FLAP grants and Title VI Centers), there is much cause for concern; but at the same time, demand for bilingual and multilingual professionals and for language instructors, translators, and interpreters continues to grow in our government and corporate sectors, particularly for those languages labeled “critical languages” by the federal government.

Much of my own perspective on the state of language study in the US is colored by my work with STARTALK and its network of language educators, and I know each of you has a unique perspective on the current situation based on your language(s) of interest and the institutions and geographic areas in which you are active. I’d like to highlight some of the promising developments that we can work together to nurture in the coming months and years. I apologize in advance for my focus in this letter on K-12 when many members of NCOLCTL are in higher education, but I do believe that improvements in K-12 language access and program quality will ultimately drive greater demand for and access to language learning in higher education as well, including expansion of language-intensive study abroad.

One of the components of language programs about which I am most hopeful is teacher supply and teacher quality: in STARTALK, we are seeing many cases in which the effectiveness of individual teachers -- and therefore the quality of the programs in which they teach -- improves dramatically over the course of several summers. We are fortunate that in our highly diverse US population, there are educated native speakers of many languages who are also proficient in English and who can be trained to use effective language teaching methods in a relatively short time. In addition, we are seeing “pockets of excellence” in which school districts, and even whole states such as in the Utah Chinese project, are introducing well-planned and highly effective immersion and dual immersion programs. While I personally am a strong proponent of
a dual immersion model -- not least because it costs no more than having no language program at all -- in many states there are now a number of school districts with strong, well-planned curricula in various models, yielding impressive learner outcomes. Research findings are ever stronger -- and ever more widely quoted -- showing that early, sustained learning of a language is extremely beneficial to the overall cognitive development and academic performance of our children. Ironically in light of funding cutbacks, I would argue that the US has never had such a rich supply of well-developed curricula and materials available for sharing with new programs -- nor such solid approaches to language teacher preparation and professional development.

Despite all these fine resources, local school access to excellent language programs remains painfully rare across the US. What more can be done -- what must be done? With US public school outcomes ranked 13th internationally -- behind a dozen other industrialized nations -- languages would seem to compete with a host of other school subjects perceived as “more critical” to student success. I’d like to mention just a few efforts that could increase the teaching of the LCTLs, particularly those deemed “critical” to US interests at this time.

1. Make national resources available for local needs - support local school systems in finding and adopting well-designed curricula, in identifying instructional models that work for them, and in finding qualified teachers.

2. Host, pool, and share instructional resources at minimal or no cost, including distance- and blended-learning courses to assure availability to every student of multi-year sequences of instruction that incorporates sound performance-based assessment.

3. Provide nationwide access to effective teacher development and credentialing resources through distance delivery of teacher education, including nationwide access to mentored, reflective practicum experiences; and eventually an alternative route to teacher certification for critical languages that can be recognized by any state that chooses.

This list of components of a national language education system may seem out of reach, but it is not. Many of the components exist already, and I believe that much of the needed consensus already exists as well. With a strong K-12 base, colleges and universities can step in to provide career-related advanced study of “less-commonly-taught” languages, including wider availability of Flagship-quality study and practicum experiences abroad, and virtual international collaborations with students in other countries. Utopian? I no longer think so. Technological advances, qualified teachers, and demonstrably effective curricular models are making it possible for the US to reclaim its place as an education leader -- in world languages as well as in other disciplines equally important for our future.

I am extremely proud of the leadership role that NCOLCTL has played and continues to play in furthering the teaching and learning of the MANY languages of the world that our nation needs in order to thrive. The NCOLCTL conference is an important gathering point not only for our own members, but increasingly for language- or region-specific organizations who can benefit from shared interests and shared resources. I look forward to seeing many old friends and colleagues and to meeting many new ones at this year’s conference -- ever more linguistically diverse, and increasingly central to our nation’s linguistic capabilities.

Welcome back to Madison!

Catherine Ingold
LCTLs AND TECHNOLOGY – OPENLANGUAGES.NET INITIATIVE

Dr. Jacques du Plessis (Jacques@uwm.edu)
School of Information Studies
University of Wisconsin (UWM)
Bolton 510
3210N Maryland Ave
Milwaukee, WI, 53211
Tel 414.229.2856
www.afrikaans.us
www.openlanguages.net
www.sois.uwm.edu/jacques

The Openlanguages.net initiative is an environment that is now being used for four semesters as the only textbook and learning environment for Afrikaans. The challenge provided by the constant movement of technology and the demands of learners regarding learning tools and technological offerings is exciting. A new push is the development of mobile apps. The proliferation of smartphones makes this an important platform, and tools to address these needs will be vital for our future as language teachers. Currently I am working on a mobile app for vocabulary learning and on an interactive tracking system for learners to plot and track their progression. I plan to do a demonstration of the environment as a poster at the next NCOLCTL conference. If you would like NCOLCTL to form a technology discussion group where we can share our technology experiences, please email jacques@uwm.edu to express your interest in this idea.

Kind regards / Groete / Bis später! / à plus tard / Kwaheri!

NEWS FROM THE CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Janet Zhiqun Xing/邢志群
CLTA President, 2012
Professor of Chinese & Linguistics
Western Washington University
Bellingham, WA 98225-9097
Janet.Xing@wwu.edu

It’s an honor and a pleasure for me to serve as the President of the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA) this year. This is a very special year for all of us, as it marks the 50th anniversary of the association. I will consult and work closely with the outgoing President, Chuanren Ke, the Executive Director, Yea-fen Chen, the Board of Directors, and the officers of the association to plan and celebrate this special year.

One of the most exciting developments in our field is the emergence of regional Chinese Language Teachers Associations affiliated with CLTA. Right now there are seven of them in the United States: CLTAC (California), CCLTC (Colorado), CLTA-NC (North Carolina), CLTA-SC (Southern California), CLTA-Texas, CLTA-WA (Washington State), and WACLT (Wisconsin). I look forward to working closely with the presidents of these regional associations to develop a model of collaboration in teacher training and promotion of the association’s missions. We encourage and welcome all other regional organizations to join us and to build and strengthen our field.

The CLTA Annual Conference has become a central platform for our members to share cutting-edge ideas in teaching and research. For the first time in history, we were able to accommodate five parallel sessions with over 200 presenters in the two-and-a-half day annual meeting in 2011. We will do that again
this year with our conference theme “Many Paths and One Goal” to celebrate the association’s 50th birthday. I look forward to working with this year’s Program Chair, Hongyin Tao, and Conference Chair, Sue-mei Wu, to plan an exciting meeting in Philadelphia. The Call for Papers is open, and I encourage you to submit a proposal and to join us in November.

CLTA is not only the oldest, but has also become the biggest organization for Chinese language teachers outside China. This would not have been possible without your support, especially those individuals and institutions that have provided financial support to the association’s various causes over the past 50 years. The most recent support came from Peking University Press and has helped us establish the CLTA Peking University Press Publication Award. Anyone who has had an article accepted and published in the association’s journal (JCLTA) one year prior to the award year may apply for the award. The first award will be given in 2012.

In closing, I want to thank our outgoing president, Chuanren Ke, and our outgoing members of the Board of Directors, Adam Ross, Claudia Ross (IPP 2011), Scott McGinnis, and Meng Yeh for their dedicated service and contribution to the association. I also want to thank John Chang, Tianwei Xie, and Zhengsheng Zhang for their continued efforts in making the association’s journal, newsletter, and website more accessible and valuable to all members. I know we can do more, and I welcome comments and suggestions that will help us strengthen the association and better serve our members.

NEWS FROM THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF TURKIC LANGUAGES

Erika H Gilson
Executive Secretary-Treasurer
ehgilson@princeton.edu

The American Association of Teachers of Turkic Languages, founded in 1985 as the American Association of Teachers of Turkish, is a private, non-profit, non-political organization of individuals interested in the languages and literatures of the Turks.

AATT is managed by a five-member Executive Board elected by the membership. The President and the Executive Secretary-Treasurer are appointed positions, and officers are elected to three-year terms. The Executive Secretary-Treasurer is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the association. All serve without compensation.

The Association’s Activities in 2010-2011

We feel that one of the association’s important contributions are the graduate student pre-conferences that we organize and sponsor every year the day before the Middle East Studies Association [MESA] and Central Eurasian Studies Society [CESS] conferences.

We invite graduate students who are using one of the Turkic languages in their research – in any field – to submit papers. Very often students dealing with less commonly taught languages work pretty much alone at their institutions; at the pre-conference they have a chance to interact with potential colleagues, meet people in different fields who happen to use one of our languages in their research, and test their presentation skills. We seek
With the announcement of a new flagship for Turkish/Turkic at Indiana University, there will be an increased level of activity in the field, with AATT involvement to ensure the success of this new entity.

NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL LANGUAGE PROGRAMS (NASILP)

Amy Pressler
NASILP Secretariat
The Critical Languages Program
1717 E. Speedway Blvd, Suite 3312
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721-0151
520 626 5258
http://www.nasilp.net/

For nearly 40 years, the National Association of Self-Instructional Language Programs (NASILP) has helped hundreds of higher educational institutions offer accredited courses in over 80 languages using a form of tutored self-instruction. NASILP provides consultation and resources for starting and expanding LCTL programs, particularly for languages that would ordinarily be financially unfeasible. NASILP currently has over 60 member institutions, with seven new members...
joining this year.

In October, NASILP held its annual conference in Washington, DC. A few of the highlights included presentations on efficacy, program design, and distance learning. Representatives from the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC), the Defense Language Institute (DLI), and JNCL-NCLIS also gave presentations.

In November, the University of Arizona Critical Languages Program - “home” of the NASILP Secretariat - released the re-mastering of its Beginning Turkish CD-ROM (originally published in 2000) into DVD-ROM format. The courseware materials have been updated and now include the latest MaxBrowser technology, which provides several new features: support for latest 64-bit versions of Windows, improved lesson printing, and greater ease of use. The Beginning Turkish DVD-ROM is available from the University of Arizona Press for $79.95. See http://cls.arizona.edu/tur for more information, including reviews, Internet delivery options, and the Intermediate Turkish and Advanced Turkish titles.

NEWS ON THE MODERN GREEK LANGUAGE EDUCATION FIELD

Eva Prionas (eprionas@stanford.edu)
President, MGLTA

The Modern Greek Language Teachers Association (MGLTA) marked several important milestones in 2011. MGLTA, a professional organization for the field of Modern Greek Language Education, promotes best teaching practices, supports local programs, disseminates information on language education, and creates opportunities for professional development activities. During 2011, MGLTA, in collaboration with the Hellenic Link and educators at the national level, supported the efforts to create national standards for Modern Greek. A task force comprised of K-16 educators, and representing geographical areas and Greek programs throughout the United States, is working to see this project through, under the approval, framework, and partnership of ACTFL. As standards define the agenda for the future developments in the field of language education, MGLTA and its membership believe that Greek language curricula must be updated to include the national standards as the tool to build performance standards for linguistic and cultural competency. Greek language programs will align their curriculum and assessment to the national standards and will follow guidelines for implementing the standards. Teaching with the standards will permeate programs of professional development and will become a part of the preparation and professionalization of Greek language educators. The Task Force met in Boston during the ACTFL conference in November 2010. A second meeting took place in Madison, Wisconsin at the NCOLCTL conference in April 2011, and most recently, in November 2011, the Task Force met at the ACTFL conference in Denver. Workshops and meetings to discuss ongoing work were fruitful and have created a strong collaborative environment. A Reviewers’ Board and an Advisory Council are in place while development of the standards for Modern Greek continues. Funding for the task force’s efforts has been provided generously by the Spyropoulos Foundation and ACTFL. We appreciate their support.

Another highlight this year has been the creation of a Special Interest Group (SIG) in Modern Greek under ACTFL. The SIG had its first business meeting and a workshop at Denver, at the ACTFL conference. Language educators of Modern Greek as well as language educators of other fields with an interest in Modern Greek participated with enthusiasm. The SIG is currently organizing activities for the
The 2012 ACTFL conference and is focusing on offering quality professional programs to Greek language educators, creating collaborations to enhance K-16 articulation, building community and unifying efforts among Greek language educators at the state, regional, and national level, and advancing professional development programs for Greek language educators.

In April of 2012, MGLTA will hold its business meeting and a workshop in Madison during the NCOLCTL conference, and in June of 2012, MGLTA members will meet for a two-day conference at Stanford University in California.

MGLTA thanks its membership for their enthusiasm and strong participation, and appreciates the support from NCOLCTL and the opportunity to connect with other LCTL organizations. Collaborative efforts and creation of a strong knowledge base in the field benefits all LCTLs.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD: A REPORT FROM THE SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (SALTA)

News from the field: a report from the South Asian Language Teachers Association (SALTA)

The past few years have seen a flurry of activity in the field of South Asian language studies. With several South Asian languages making it to the critical language list, funding sources opened up and institutions and individuals scrambled to get a piece of the pie. At the university level, new programs beyond Hindi and Urdu were initiated. A number of teacher and student STARTALK programs were offered, at first only for Hindi and Urdu, later extending to include Dari. At the same time, awareness of community-based South Asian language programs increased. At the K-12 level, a few school districts approved South Asian language curricula. Having received a three-year federal grant, the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC) launched “DesiLearn,” a South Asian language K-12 research study which aims to document and describe all the South Asian language programs, including community-based programs for children in the U.S. Standards for teaching Hindi and Urdu were developed independently. With the success of the Hindi and Urdu STARTALK programs, the demand for tester training in Hindi and Urdu teacher training programs increased. This in turn has led to an initiative to revise the ACTFL Hindi proficiency guidelines. The Hindi-Urdu Flagship (HUF) program was established at the University of Texas at Austin with a grant from the National Security Education Program (NSEP). The establishment of HUF in turn has resulted in the development of much-needed materials for teaching Hindi and Urdu, including several innovative new directions like the Hindi-Urdu “Language for Medicine” project. We also saw initiatives in other South Asian languages beyond Hindi and Urdu, such as the series of Tamil workshops organized by S. Radhakrishnan.

On the organizational front, with generous support from NCOLCTL, the South Asian Language Teachers Association (SALTA) organized its 1st two mini-conferences in conjunction with the annual NCOLCTL Conference. The mini-conferences were a big success, for both South Asian Language teachers, who exchanged ideas and networked, and other participants, who learned about new developments in South Asian language teaching that are easily generalized to other languages. We are currently in the process of organizing our 3rd annual mini-conference, SALTA 2012, once again with the critically needed support from NCOLCTL and in conjunction with the annual NCOLCTL Conference. Thank you NCOLCTL!
So, in short, much has and is happening in the field of South Asian languages. It is true we have come a long way, but we have an even longer path ahead. We still face many urgent challenges. Most of the initiatives noted above are related to Hindi and Urdu. The ones involving other South Asian languages are very few, although South Asian languages such as Bengali, Kannada, Punjabi, Malayalam, Nepali, Pashto, Sinhala, and Tibetan -- just to name a few -- are being taught in the U.S. We need to reach out to teachers of these and other South Asian languages and get them involved in SALTA and South Asian language projects. We need to explore ways and means to exploit the large numbers of heritage language learners to increase the presence of South Asian languages in K-12. We need to educate parents about the opportunities and benefits of encouraging their children to study South Asian languages. Only then will we be on track to accomplish our mission. 

In short, like many LCTLS, we face many challenges and opportunities in South Asian language teaching. We hope that working together through NCOLCTL, we can all learn a lot from colleagues in other languages and offer a lot as well. With warm regards,

Gautami Shah
gshah@austin.utexas.edu
President, SALTA

2011 NCOLCTL Swahili STARTALK Report

Nyasha Gwaza
Assistant Director, NCOLCTL
ngwaza@ncolctl.org

The 2011 NCOLCTL Swahili STARTALK was held July 11-29th, 2011. The NALRC Co-Sponsored this year’s NCOLCTL Swahili STARTALK by meeting the expenses of two participants from Kenya. Twelve Swahili Instructors participated in the three week program. The first week was an Online Teacher Training Course which covered numerous theoretical concepts. The participants took this portion of the course from their various bases. The remaining two weeks of the training were held at the Madison Concourse Hotel in Madison, WI.

Three Master Teachers, Dr. Alwiya S. Omar, Dr. John Kiarie Wa Njogu and Dr. Antonia Schleicher conducted the intensive resident sessions. In the first week of the residential program, various Second Language Acquisition theories and standards were emphasized. The participants also learned the importance of teaching language lessons in context how to create effective lesson plans for the different proficiency levels of Swahili classes. Volunteer non-Swahili speaking students recruited mostly from the University of Wisconsin-Madison were brought in the final week of the training to enable the participants to practically utilize the theoretical skills they had acquired. Each participant designed and prepared several teaching demos that they prepared and taught to the volunteer students. After each of their demos, the participants gained valuable feedback from their peers, instructors and the volunteer students.

An awards ceremony and dinner was held at the Madison Concourse Hotel to wind up the intense three week program at which the participants gave reflections about the program. In addition, each participant received a certificate of completion from NCOLCTL. The following individuals received certificates:

Aaron Rosenberg
Belinda Mlingo
Clara Momanyi

El Colegio de Mexico
International Center for Language Studies
Catholic University of East Africa
Interview With 2011 Walton Award Winner—Dr. Alwiya Omar

1. You have been working at the University of Maryland’s National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) since 2008. Tell us about your work at the Center and your passion for languages especially LCTLs.

Thank you for asking. As you probably know, I joined the Center after almost 25 years at the School of Language Studies at the Foreign Service Institute. I retired from FSI at the end of 2006, with the idea that I’d just relax, read the books on my bedside table and putter around, but after a few months of that, I really began to miss working with language education colleagues. I met Catherine Ingold at a professional conference in DC in fall 2007, we had lunch together, and I expressed to her my interest in being more active again, after which she offered me a job. I had followed the work of the National Foreign Language Center since it was founded in 1986 under Richard Lambert, Ron Walton and Dick Brecht and had always been impressed by the Center’s efforts to help build the profession of world language education in the service to its mission, which is stated as follows on the NFLC website: Through research, collaborations, consultations, and projects, the staff and the fellows of the NFLC are dedicated to improving the nation’s ability to understand and communicate with people around the world and to manage the unprecedented flow of information resulting from globalization.

That was (and is) exactly the kind of work that I wanted to be doing, in that it draws on pretty much all aspects of my professional background, as an applied linguist and researcher, proficiency-based language teacher, language teacher educator, and language program supervisor, for both college students and adults. It also has given me opportunities to learn about and become more involved in the area of K-12 education, where I believe many of the most promising initiatives are now occurring in the United States, for both the more commonly taught languages, like Spanish, French, and German, but also for several of the NCOLCTL languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Russian, Persian, Portuguese, Swahili, Turkish and Urdu. Many of these initiatives have benefited from federal funding through such programs as the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) Youth program, the Language Flagships, and the STARTALK project, which is coordinated out of the NFLC.

One of the great joys I have experienced in my work at the NFLC has been the chance to contribute to the STARTALK project through site visit evaluations to programs in different parts of the country, participating in STARTALK conferences and task groupings, and working with core STARTALK staff on projects within the Center.

At the same time that I have been working with STARTALK here at the Center, I have also served as the chair of the voluntary citizens’ Advisory Committee on World Language Education for Arlington Public Schools in Virginia, where the last six years have seen a greatly strengthened interest from Arlington parents in having their children start learning languages in elementary school and have the chance to learn such languages as Chinese, Arabic and Japanese starting in Middle School. My involvement in this has been tremendously re-
warding, and I have found that what I have learned in STARTALK has enabled me to help Arlington in better ways, but the opposite is also true: what I am learning from Arlington parents, teachers and students enables me to contribute more effectively to STARTALK planning.

2. Tell us more about the Arabic project that you are directing at the NFLC.

The project is the result of a Title VI International Research and Studies (IRS) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The formal title of the complete project is “E-Learning Materials for Improving Reading Proficiency among Secondary School Students of Arabic and Chinese,” but we refer to the two parts of the project informally as “Read-Arabic” and “Read-Chinese.”

The first thing I should say is that I personally have only a tiny knowledge of Chinese and no capability with Arabic at all. So in the work that I am going to describe, I have been totally dependent on the linguistic and cultural knowledge of colleagues, both at Maryland and at other universities, who are experts in those languages.

Read-Chinese was first funded by IRS in 2006 as the brainchild of Dr. Mimi Met, who was then Deputy Director of the NFLC. Mimi’s vision was to take state-of-the-art courseware that the NFLC had developed to create advanced-level reading and listening comprehension materials for the Department of Defense and adapt that courseware to develop reading comprehension modules for beginning American readers of Chinese, especially at the high school level. Now, of course, there are many examples of Chinese reading materials for beginning learners, but at that time, only six years ago, they simply did not exist. So there was a clear need. The second part of Mimi’s vision was that the materials should be made available online to any user, anywhere in the world, at absolutely no cost and with no need for a password or login id.

The primary materials developers for Read-Chinese were our NCOLCTL colleagues Mike Everson, of the University of Iowa, and Cyndy Ning, of the University of Hawaii. I knew both Mike and Cyndy well, so when I joined the Center in January 2008 I was delighted to be asked to take over as the director of Read-Chinese. Shortly after I began, I was fortunate to be able to recruit two very bright Chinese graduate students in Second Language Education at the University of Maryland to serve as Graduate Assistants on the project. We tasked them first with studying the ILR and ACTFL Reading Proficiency Guidelines, in order to be able to distinguish between Novice-level and Intermediate-level tasks, and then the Chinese Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century (ACTFL, 2006), so that they would be familiar with appropriate learning activities at the relevant developmental levels. The grad students collaborated closely via email with Mike and Cyndy and with each other, our Project Coordinator and me in our offices. As we published the drafts of our work online and presented them at conferences, we received tremendously useful feedback from both teachers and users that led to changing the design of the modules in important ways. In fact, we completely revised all of the first year’s work on the project to provide learners with more of what they had told us they needed. By the time we were starting to wrap up our work on the project in January 2009, all of us felt that we wanted to continue to develop more Chinese modules.

So we submitted a new application to IRS in which we proposed both to continue to develop more Chinese modules for one additional year, with the same development team, and to start a new project to develop similar reading materials for Arabic. The crux of the proposal was that we would leverage
what we had learned from developing the Chinese materials and use it to enhance the orientation of the team that would work on Arabic and make our own leadership of the project more efficient. The idea, of course, is a very familiar one for NCOLCTL: Shared solutions for common problems! In any case, the grant was approved in summer 2009, and we continued with Read-Chinese and began with Read-Arabic at the same time. We will be finishing the Arabic project this coming June 2012.

As was the case with Read-Chinese, we were able to recruit a team of very talented people to develop the reading modules, starting with the Deputy Director on the project, Dr. Jerry Lampe, who certainly needs no introduction to NCOLCTL members, and including several more junior developers. We also again received very positive support from other leaders in the field, including Prof. Mohammed Eissa of the University of Chicago and Dr. Wafa Hassan of Michigan State University. Wafa was tremendously generous with her encouragement and knowledge, as she shared with us her then-unpublished ALIF curriculum materials that she bases on the national standards for Arabic and which have provided us with clear examples of the language and cultural content that beginning learners must master.

Unfortunately, Read-Arabic has experienced complications that were absent from Read-Chinese, and that have affected our work considerably. The most obvious was that Congress and the Department of Education cut the funding in half for every IRS project in the 2011-2012 grant year, which was to be the final year of our project. This required us to reduce both the number of modules that we could produce and our capability to do a detailed review of every module to insure the best possible quality. In addition, for personal reasons outside of the project’s control, there has been a frequent turnover in the primary development staff, unlike with Read-Chinese, where the same four people did almost all the development. Except for the project coordinator, me and Jerry Lampe, who have been there from the beginning, only one of the other six developers has been able to continue with the project for as long as a year. This has resulted in frequent need to orientation the new staff members, who, like anyone in a new job, need time to understand what is expected. It has also meant that the project has not served to develop the professional abilities of the junior members of the team as effectively as Read-Chinese. Despite these frustrations, however, I feel good about the materials that have been developed. We know that children and adults are using them across the country and that they respond to a need.

3. For many years you worked at the Foreign Service Institute. Talk about your work there and how it impacted the teaching of LCTLs.

All of my early professional experience had been as a teacher of English as a Second Language, as a teacher trainer and educator and as an applied linguist conducting research into some of the languages of Micronesia. However, I had spent three years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Thailand and another two years there, much later, as a visiting professor of English Linguistics at Chiangmai University, where I had learned Thai, so when I saw the announcement of an opening for a language training supervisor at the Foreign Service Institute who knew Thai, I applied. After having spent so many I was hired and asked to supervise the teachers and students of Thai, which I knew pretty well, Lao, which I knew some, and Burmese, which I knew not at all. Later, I was asked to supervise other languages that I did not know, including Chinese, Korean, Khmer, Albanian, Hebrew, Lat-
vian, Lithuanian and Finnish. All together, at FSI I worked with 18 LCTL language programs and one MCTL (German) and knew only three of them when I started. In addition, I spent almost ten years as the head of the Staff Development program.

FSI was a very stimulating and exciting place for me to work. The language programs are intensive, with five hours per day of instruction, five days a week, for up to 44 weeks. Classes are small, never exceeding six students and usually fewer. Both the students and the teachers are highly motivated. Most important, the students were preparing themselves for specific responsibilities in the country, where they would need to understand the explicit and implicit communications of the people in that country and to represent the United States to them at a high level. The task of preparing intelligent adults to do that is practical, challenging and very important.

What I learned at FSI was, first, that I really needed to listen to the learners’ individual perspectives on what they would need to do in the language in the country and on how things were going for them in the course and, second, that I also needed to listen carefully to each teacher’s perspectives so that I could help mediate between students and teachers to try to ensure the best results for everyone. I remember when I first got to FSI, I went about to observe classes, and in one class taught by a senior teacher, I felt that the teaching approach was old-fashioned and did not reflect the new theories about language teaching that I had learned. I decided that I would need to do some intensive teacher training, but, before I could start, I talked with the students who had been in that class I observed, and they volunteered to me that they really liked to study with that teacher, because he was not threatening and because he seemed to know intuitively when they needed to be challenged in class and when they needed to reinforce what they had already learned. They told me they felt that they learned more from that teacher than from any other. The result of that was that I went back to observe the teacher again, but with “different eyes.” Instead of going to “evaluate” the teacher, I went to try to learn what he was doing that the students responded to so positively. And after the classes, I talked with him and listened to what he thought was going on in the class and with the students and what they each needed.

When I think back on the evolution of my language teaching philosophy, I sometimes like to say that the field has evolved from a model when I began teaching in the Peace Corps 45 years ago that we “teach the textbook,” to a model in the early 1970’s that we “teach the class,” to teaching individuals and small groups of students, to seeking ways to make it possible for each individual learner in a course to learn as much of what he or she needs as s/he is capable of. As Earl Stevick once wrote about some students at FSI, “If a student tells you that he needs to do something in order to learn, the chances are very good that he is correct.”

4. While at FSI you also chaired the government’s Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) for several years. Can you tell us about that and its importance for LCTLs?

The ILR has been in existence for about 55 years. There is a good short history of the organization on the ILR webpage at http://www.govt-ilr.org and also a history of the ILR Language Proficiency Skill-level Descriptions. Although the ILR was first established by both government and academic scholars, when I joined FSI, the ILR had become a monthly meeting of primarily government personnel from agencies and government contractors involved in language training and testing, and the standing ILR committees were closed to non-
federal attendees. By around 1998, however, it had become obvious that the ILR needed to reach beyond its existing membership; at the same time, academics and NGO personnel were seeking to interact more with government agencies, especially FSI and DLI.

At the same time, developments in technology suddenly made it possible for the ILR to share what it was working on with other people by an email listserv and a public webpage. When I was asked to coordinate the ILR in mid-1999, the time had become right for the ILR to open not only its plenary presentations but also the regular meetings of its standing committees to any interested professional. And that is the situation today, under the leadership of the current chair Scott McGinnis. Any NCOLCTL member and student or teacher or tester of a LCTL (or other language) is welcome to join the ILR listserv, use the rich resources on its webpage, and attend the monthly plenary and committee meetings (Training, Testing, and Translation & Interpretation). Many plenary presentations are given by government experts, but others have been presented by representatives of professional associations and NGOs, and by individual scholars.

The events of September 11, 2001, of course, drove home to government the critical need to increase the nation’s capacity to use many less commonly taught languages at very advanced levels. The Department of Education publishes an annual list of the 78 most critical government needs for language proficiency and regional expertise (http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/consultation-2012.pdf.) The ILR has been one of the means used to try to communicate these needs broadly, to invite ideas for how to address them and to share successful initiatives to create structures to help develop advanced language skills and cultural understanding, such as the Language Flagship and STAR-TALK and the work of the Language Resource Centers. Three needs that became clear during this past decade are for more highly skilled translators and interpreters and for much greater competence in intercultural understanding and communication. In response, ILR task groups made up of government and academic experts have developed ILR Level Descriptions for Translation, Interpretation, and Intercultural Communication and have posted them publicly on the webpage.

5. You are one of the founding members of NCOLCTL since you have been involved for over twenty years now. Can you tell us, based on your experience, the growth you have witnessed since you joined NCOLCTL till now?

The growth and development of the NCOLCTL community have been tremendous and one of the things that I feel most pleased to have contributed to in a small way. The entity that was to become the National Council of Organizations of the Less Commonly Taught—the original name of our organization—started as a group of two dozen very skeptical academic leaders who were brought together in 1988 for a two-day meeting at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, by Ron Walton and Dick Brecht, co-Deputy Directors of the NFLC, to see whether they had any needs in common that might be served by joining together professionally. Ron was a past president of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, and Dick was a leader in the American Council of Teachers of Russian. The first meetings were funded by the Ford Foundation as an attempt at field building. Around the table were senior leaders of about a dozen language organizations, including Eyamba Bokamba and Lioba Moshi of ALTA; Teresita Ramos of COTSEAL; Gilead Morahg of NAPH; John Schillinger of AATSEEL; Madeline Chu of CLTA; John Means of NASILP; Dan Davidson of ACTR; Erika Gilson of the Turkish Teachers; Laurel Rodd for Japanese;
Dilworth Parkinson and Mahdi Alosh of AATA; and Jim Gair and Surendra Gambhir, who would found SALTA with the Council’s support. Most of the organizations represented were dedicated to the needs of individual languages (the exceptions were ALTA, AATSEEL, COTSEAL, NASILP and SALTA, most of which were very new.) What Ron and Dick asked us to do was to begin to identify with a broader field of teaching “Less Commonly Taught Languages,” rather than only with our own individual languages. That did not come easily.

By 1990, we had discovered that we had enough in common that we agreed together to form a new organization, with Terry Ramos of COTSEAL as our first president, Eyamba Bokamba as vice-president, and Ron and Dick as co-executive directors. The motto was established as “Shared solutions to common problems,” which captured both the fact that we have much in common and our willingness to collaborate and share in addressing our common needs. The Ford Foundation pledged to renew our funding for another seven years; during that period, the member organizations worked separately and together to develop documents that we referred to as “Language Learning Frameworks.” The “language learning framework” involved four components: 1) a set of core principles which underlie all language learning, together with what these principles imply for students, teachers, teacher-trainers, policy-makers, and researchers; 2) an assessment of the local conditions under which the language learning would take place; 3) a set of strategies by which the principles could be implemented in the local conditions; and 4) the final program resulting from applying the framework.

The process of development of these frameworks for individual languages and for the field as a whole — more than the actual frameworks themselves — was one of the most important steps in the development of NCOLCTL as a professional organization. Three other similarly impactful steps followed:

• In spring, 2000, in conjunction with the Georgetown Round Table on Language and Linguistics, NCOLCTL announced a call for proposals for its first conference that would be open to all interested LCTL individuals. In this year and the next years, I think we were all more than a little surprised at the great enthusiasm and joy of the LCTL teachers who attended NCOLCTL from around the country. I remember that three teachers I worked with at FSI (Albanian, Latvian, and Georgian) ran up to me after the 2001 conference to tell me how powerful an experience it had been for them to share their work and ideas with other LCTL educators. This is an emotion and a message that have only become stronger at each succeeding NCOLCTL conference.

• In 2003, when the grants to NCOLCTL were just about exhausted, the then-president of NCOLCTL, Antonia Schleicher, reported to the board that her institution, the University of Wisconsin, had agreed to provide a home for the Council and to host the annual conference. This tremendous step, together with Antonia’s willingness to serve on as executive director, provided NCOLCTL with a stability and continuity that it had never had.

• Under the leadership of Antonia and a series of superb presidents (Mike, Gautami, Hong Gang, Catherine), the Council took further steps to establish its effective influence. While remaining an “organization of organizations,” NCOLCTL also invited individual members to join and established representation for those members on the board. It committed to publish JNCOLCTL, an annual reviewed journal of professional work and research in the field. It invited member organizations to hold their annual conferences in Madison, in conjunction with NCOLCTL — an invitation that has been accepted enthusiastically by ALTA, SALTA
and COTSEAL.

Thanks to the initiative of former executive director Scott McGinnis, NCOLCTL had already begun to reach out to such other professional organizations as ACTFL, the Joint National Committee on Languages (JNCL) and the Coalition for International Education (CIE) before the Council headquarters moved to Madison. In recent years, moreover, the importance and influence of the Council have grown to the point that Antonia now sits on the boards of both ACTFL and JNCL and brings our common issues, perspectives and concerns to broad national attention. I think it is definitely possible to say that NCOLCTL has come a very long way and it is on its way to being still more influential in language education.

6. You have chaired the NCOLCTL Special Interest Group (SIG) at past ACTFL conferences. Tell us more about this SIG and the importance of presenting at ACTFL.

I have written much too much already, so let me just say that it is important for LCTL educators to attend the annual ACTFL conventions and to attend sessions given by scholars in other disciplines from their own. For example, there are always excellent presentations in such areas as testing, classroom-based research, curriculum development, and teacher education, and the publisher’s exposition has many examples of learning materials that might give you ideas for your own teaching.

ACTFL attendees also have a great deal to learn from LCTL educators. One place where that can occur is in the pre-conference workshops, where there are always small-group and pair-based tasks and it’s easy to talk with each other. Another way is to join one of the SIGs, and especially the LCTL-SIG, where a NCOLCTL member will always feel welcome. When I go to ACTFL, I usually attend meetings of the Research-SIG, Teacher Education-SIG and LCTL-SIG. I learn things that are important for me, and I make contacts with other professionals who are interested in things that interest me. The LCTL-SIG will also encourage members to submit proposals to give presentations.

7. And a question that was asked of last year’s Walton recipient: What advice would you give to teachers and administrators of less commonly taught languages, and do you think we can move from being less commonly taught to more commonly taught languages?

Those are hard questions that I think I’ll answer more in terms of the field as a whole than for individuals. To take the second question first, at least two languages—Chinese and Arabic—are already moving towards being more commonly taught, especially because they are being increasingly offered in American secondary schools (7-12) and there are increased incentives, such as scholarships and study-abroad opportunities, for students to study them in college and graduate school. Spanish is almost certainly becoming the country’s de facto “second language,” and other modern languages like French, German, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, Portuguese, Italian and Japanese will also be studied by significant numbers of students in high schools and universities across the country, provided that there continues to be some federal financial support to offer them. Also if government support continues to some extent, I expect that particular areas of the country will undertake to offer certain LCTLs in high schools if they are well represented in the community, such as Vietnamese, Tagalog and Khmer in parts of California and, I believe, Korean in the Seattle area. Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Turkish and Swahili are also beginning to be taught and studied in some high schools, by both Heritage and beginning learners. I would anticipate that the
demand for more such offerings will grow in the communities, as programs like STARTALK, NSLI-Youth and the Language Flagships become better known.

To respond to these kinds of demands, however, our colleges and universities will need to support two critical needs for our fields. One is to build university programs with the ability to develop young people with superior language proficiency for as many of our languages as possible. The Language Flagships have shown how this can be done successfully for ten LCTL languages identified as “critical,” and that model might be replicated for the many other languages provided the necessary resources are made available. At present, however, many universities are teaching only two years of many LCTLS, if they continue to offer them at all. And funding is threatened for advanced study abroad and for crucial consortia like the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute, which provides a single location where students can take language courses not available at their home institutions.

The second need that I think must be met is to provide focused teacher development and certification for prospective teachers of LCTLS in K-12 education. Crucially, these programs must be able to take motivated individuals who already have a bachelor’s degree and know the language, either because they were brought up with it or because they learned it to a high level in school or work, and provide expedited coursework and practicum to prepare them to teach successfully in American classrooms. Ideally, such a program would make full use of distance learning technology before, during and after the training, in addition to teacher-fronted learning, and would be completed in twelve months. As STAR-TALK has reminded us, and as most of us learned some time ago through working with highly effective colleagues in teaching a LCTL, there are many very capable, highly motivated, potentially excellent language teachers who have not attended a school of education in the United States.

From The Secretariat Desk

It is a great pleasure to welcome all members and friends of NCOLCTL to our 15th NCOLCTL Annual Conference. It has been quite an eventful year for less commonly taught languages and NCOLCTL has also had to navigate through some of the very same budgetary challenges that many of our constituencies have had to face. As a result, some of our projected targets were unattainable although we were still able to see noticeable growth in our organization as a whole. Input from you continues to be valuable as we continue to shape our organization to the professionalism and efficiency we need in all our operations. We have, and will continue to listen to all your valuable suggestions.

The NCOLCTL Secretariat is very grateful for the support of Dr. Gilles Bousquet, the Dean of the Division of International Studies & Vice Provost for Globalization at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, for his continued generous support of NCOLCTL. We are very grateful also to the Qatar Foundation International, China Sprout, Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Language Service Corps for being amongst the main sponsors of the 2012 NCOLCTL Conference. Our sincere gratitude also goes to the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC), for its continued support to NCOLCTL. Thanks also to the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Center for European Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Center for South Asia for their generous financial contributions and sponsorship for NCOLCTL 2012. We are also very grateful to our exhibitors and advertisers that are participating.
at this year’s conference. Without all this support, NCOLCTL 2012 would not be a reality.

I would like to convey special gratitude to the NCOLCTL 2012 Conference Planning Committee for their great work and guidance in the planning of this conference and for the excellent quality of the presentations selected for the conference. We have about 140 sessions that will be conducted at this conference including 4 workshops that will be led by prominent leaders in the field. For the first time in the history of NCOLCTL, we will be hosting an OPI Familiarization workshop sponsored by ACTFL. We are very grateful to ACTFL for their support.

Some of our organizational affiliates, namely: the African Language Teachers Association (ALTA), South Asian Language Teachers Association (SALTA), Council of Teachers of Southeast Asia Languages (COTSEAL), Modern Greek Language Teachers Association (MGLTA) and the American Association of Teachers of Japanese (AATJ) will all be conducting separate sessions and meetings at this year’s conference. We wish them every success. The 15th sitting of the NCOLCTL Delegate Assembly will also take place at this conference on Saturday April 28, 2012.

The latest volumes of the NCOLCTL Journal (JNCOLCTL) have been published and are available to members at this conference. Please ensure that you pick up your copies of Volume 10 and Volume 11. Our congratulations and gratitude go to Dr. Danko Sipka, (JNCOLCTL Editor), for the tremendous work and time he commits into editing of each and every one of these journals. We have seen consistent quality and growth of JNCOLCTL under Dr. Sipka’s Editorship. Currently, we are in the process of exploring options of enabling access to JNCOLCTL online, without compromising the free access to the journal by our members.

Many thanks to Dr. Alwiya S. Omar and the support of the NALRC staff in the production of the NCOLCTL Bulletin. My appreciation also extends to those NCOLCTL organizational members who committed their time to write articles for the bulletin. The bulletin’s success rests on the contributions of our membership who send to us any interesting LCTL happenings in their various communities. All our bulletins are available online to members and can be accessed upon logging in to our website.

My sincere gratitude extends also to Dr. Catherine Ingold for her very able leadership at the helm of NCOLCTL these past two years. Her term as President will be concluded at the close of this conference and we are looking forward to working with her as she assumes her new role on the NCOLCTL Board as the Immediate Past President. I would also like to take this opportunity to offer my best wishes to Dr. Alwiya S. Omar as she assumes the NCOLCTL Presidency. Welcome also to Dr. Bill Rivers, the newly elected Vice President of NCOLCTL. We look forward to the continued growth and success of our organization under the leadership of this new team. In the same vein, let me add my deep admiration and gratitude to Dr. Hong Gang Jin for her transformational leadership and service to NCOLCTL these past 6 years. She has served as Vice President (2006-2008), President (2008-2010) and Immediate Past President (2010-2012). Dr. Jin will continue to be a valuable resource and we will continue to seek her out for her invaluable guidance and experience.
Thank you to all our conference volunteers and the NALRC Staff for their efforts towards the success of this conference.

Best wishes to you all at this NCOLCTL 2012 Conference. It is my hope that this 2012 NCOLCTL Conference will help you fulfill your professional goals in the field of LCTL’s and adds to your professional development. Please feel free to contact the NCOLCTL Secretariat at anytime with your questions and let us continue to work together towards being the preeminent LCTLs organization.

Looking forward to a successful Conference!

Antonia Folarin Schleicher
NCOLCTL Executive Director

Upcoming Events, Conferences, Summer Institutes and Workshops

1.) April 26-29, 2012
   National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages
   15th International Conference
   Promoting Advanced Language Proficiency and Intercultural Competency in LCTL’s
   Madison, WI

2.) May 19-20, 2012
   19th Princeton Japanese Pedagogy Forum
   Princeton, NJ
   Princeton.edu/pjpf

3.) May 21st-June 1st, 2012
   National African Language Resource Center (NALRC)
   Second Language Acquisition Certificate Program for African Language Instructors
   Madison, WI
   nalrc.wisc.edu

4.) May 29-June 1, 2012
   National African Language Resource Center
   Summer Technology Workshop
   Madison, WI
   nalrc.wisc.edu
5.) **May 30-June 2, 2012**
North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers 2012 Conference (NAACLT)
Bloomington, IN
Naaclt.org

6.) **June 21-16, 2012**
The Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium
Annual Conference
Notre Dame, IN
www.calico.org/conference

7.) **June 25-27, 2012**
National Association of Professors of Hebrew
International Conference on Hebrew Language, Literature and Culture
Los Angeles, CA
http://vanhise.lss.wisc.edu/naph/?q=node/4

8.) **July 9-27, 2012**
National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL)
Swahili STARTALK
Madison, WI
Startalk.ncolctl.org

9.) **July, 2012**
Center for Language and Education Research
Summer 2012 Workshops
East Lansing, Michigan
http://clear.msu.edu/clear/professionaldev/summerworkshops.php

10.) **October 18-20,2012**
Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition
Immersion 2012: Bridging Contexts for a Multilingual World Conference
St Paul, MN
www.carla.umn.edu/development.html

11.) **November 16-18 2012**
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
Annual Convention and World Languages Expo
Philadelphia, PA
http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3283
12.) **November 16-18 2012**  
Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA)  
2012 Annual Meeting  
Philadelphia, PA  
clta-us.org/meeting.htm

13.) **November 29-December 1, 2012**  
African Studies Association  
55th Annual Meeting  
Philadelphia, PA  

14.) **January 3-6, 2013**  
American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages (AASTEEL)  
Annual Conference  
Boston, MA  
www.aatseel.org/program/

---

**National Council for Less Commonly Taught Languages**

NCOLCTL Secretariat  
4231 Humanities Bldg.  
455 N Park Street  
Madison, WI 53706  
http://www.ncolctl.org  
secretariat@ncolctl.org  
Ph. (608) 265 7905  
Fax. (608) 265 7904

**NCOLCTL Spring 2012 Bulletin**

*Editor*: Alwiyah S. Omar  
*Production Editors*: Nyasha, Gwaza, Akinsola Ogundeji  
*Production Staff*: Kevin Barry
NCOLCTL EXECUTIVE BOARD

Catherine Ingold, Ph.D  
*President*  
Director - National Foreign Language Center  
University of Maryland

Alwiya S. Omar, Ph.D  
*Vice-President*  
Associate Professor of Linguistics  
Indiana University

Hong Gang Jin, Ph.D  
*Immediate Past President*  
Professor of East Asian Languages  
Hamilton College

Susan Schmidt, Ph.D  
*Secretary/Treasurer*  
Professor  
University of Colorado

Jacques du Plessis, Ph.D  
*Executive Board Member*  
Associate Professor  
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Muhammad S. Eissa, Ph.D  
*Executive Board Member*  
Arabic and Islamic Studies  
University of Chicago

Antonia Schleicher, PhD  
*Executive Director*  
National African Language Resource Center  
University of Wisconsin