Message from, The President

- Jacques C du Plessis

Dear NCOLCTL Members and Colleagues,

NCOLCTL celebrates 25 years of growth. It is a time to reminisce. It is a time to thank those who have served our languages well. We stand on their shoulders today. It is also a time to recognize how the world has changed and to look ahead – to be bold and assertive as we plan our future.

In retrospect, it is valuable to see what has changed and where challenges persist since NCOLCTL was founded. As less commonly taught languages, for many of us, we still struggle to have our classes scheduled during times that are attractive to students. We struggle to retain instructors, even very talented instructors, and we are still not paid well and few are offered a permanent academic home.

The good news is that we have been blessed with leadership in NCOLCTL that has attracted attention of the government. The STARTALK program has been a great blessing. Successful summer programs have ensured renewed interest in the continued commitment to teaching and scholarship of many of our languages. Great efforts are ongoing to establish standards. We value the good relationship with ACTFL to serve LCTLs. Many of our teachers have been trained to conduct oral proficiency interviews, and through the efforts of NCOLCTL and our Resource Centers, the quality of our instruction has made significant progress, and teachers have been trained in technology. Many of us fondly recall the summer workshops in Madison.
Personally, I have been impressed by, and very grateful for the sense of camaraderie we have in our midst. There is a true sense of mutual support and a collective awareness that if we support each other, we are all stronger. At the NCOLCTL conferences, I cherish the values we share to form a community with a spirit of inclusivity, caring, and good humor. I thank all of you for building faith in the bonds we have despite great cultural diversity especially in a time like this with demonstrations of hate and brutality in the world. It is a wonderful affirmation to feel our commitment to our faith in our deeper mission of building peace, tolerance, a quest and commitment to understand and learn from each other, and to be the examples of respect and charity. The hard economic times of most of the past decade have not been easy on foreign languages, but we have stayed focused and we are stronger. In conclusion, I want to focus on two challenges we have to take up - technology and K-12.

Technology: The ubiquitous nature of internet connectivity, cloud, and mobile technologies are changing assumptions. An interesting example outside our field - a global network of radiography centers allows hospitals anywhere to submit their digital x-rays at 3 am and to have them read immediately. We have to think beyond our university. With web conference and social media technologies, we can bring universities together into one class. We are able to better connect with native speakers. It is time to consider new formats and wider borders for our classes. Open Courseware is a growing trend and it offers a great promise to bridge the lack of materials for many of our languages.

K-12: As the geopolitical shift happens, the focus will move more towards some of the LCTLs. We have to learn from each other to build successful programs for our languages in the K-12 space. Utah is a good example with their Chinese program in the K-12 space. It is time to challenge the Spanish, French, and German logic in the schools – in a world with 7000 languages, foreign language is a really big idea.
Several noteworthy events have occurred since last year’s conference. NCOLCTL STARTALK also held its Swahili Professional Development Program over the summer (July 9th-27th). Week one consisted of an online teacher training course – from the participants' home base and weeks 2-3 were held at Bloomington, Indiana. I want to thank master teachers Dr. Alwiya Omar and Dr. Kiarie Wa Njogu and Dr. Esther Lisanza who taught during the program with me. At this program, emphasis was placed on numerous L2 acquisition theories and standard as well as what makes a successful language classroom. This year, we have applied for a grant for the 2015 Summer STARTALK which will include language instructors from other less commonly taught languages like Arabic, Dari, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Swa-hilli, Turkish, and Urdu.

Some additional events that took place last year include two trainings at Ho-Chunk Nation, one of the strongest indigenous native Americans at Black River Falls, Wisconsin. The trainings come as a deliberate effort of NCOLCTL to incorporate Native American languages into the larger association. NCOLCTL was also represented at the African Studies Association (ASA) Conference in Indianapolis. Thanks to our secretariat staff who were there exhibiting our products and advertising the conference. I represented both NCOLCTL and ALTA at the 2014 ACTFL Convention in San Antonio.

NCOLCTL would like to thank the National African Language Resource Center (NALRC) for its continued support of NCOLCTL. We would also like to thank all our sponsors, exhibitors and advertisers. Without the support of all these groups and individuals, this con-
ference would not have been possible.
Once again, the NCOLCTL conference planning committee has done what was expected of them. I’d like to extend my gratitude to each member for not only planning and coordinating but also for doing a great job in selecting this year’s presentations, editing the program and choosing this year’s Walton Award winner.

For this year’s conference and presentations, we promise to enhance the skills of all attendees, as well as further the field of second language education. Issues such as cultural understanding in language education, the use of authentic situations in language learning, technology, social media, multi-modality in the classroom, using film to teach LCT’s and online learning are only a few examples of what is going to be discussed at the conference this year. I hope everyone has the chance to attend a wide range of presentations. Please be sure to attend presentations offered by our organizational affiliates as they promise to be just as interesting.

I would like to thank the NCOLCTL board comprising Jacques C du Plessis, Wafa Hassan, Susan Schmidt, Odeese Ghassa-Khalil, Yea-Fen Chen and Gabriel Nik. A special vote of thanks goes to outgoing members-at-large Odeese Ghassa-Khalil and Yea-Fen Chen for their outstanding service to the board. We wish them well in their future endeavors. I would also like to welcome our new member-at-large Anuosha Sedighi and Ercan Balci.

Thanks also go to Alwiya Omar, Immediate Past President, for her continued involvement as well as helping in the smooth transition ushering in our new President, Jacques C du Plessis. The past and current presidents have proven to be a great leadership team and we look forward to continued growth under their guidance and support. Last, but not least, thanks to all of you attending this year’s conference.

All of us at NCOLCTL hope that the presentations you attend and the exhibitor booths you visit will help in enhancing your professional development and furthering your goals. The NCOLCTL Secretariat is always available to help in any way possible, so please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Interview with Catherine Ingold, 2015 A. Ronald Walton Award Winner

Congratulations! I am very happy that you are receiving the Walton Award! No doubt that your amazing achievements in the world languages field and specifically the less commonly taught languages are visible to the world. I personally have had the opportunity to benefit and learn from your language initiatives.

What are some of the highlights in your career that you personally treasure?
I have been really very fortunate: I’ve held a number of different positions in which I had opportunities to learn and try new things. In some ways, the most “dramatic” was right after I finished my course work for my doctorate.
at the University of Virginia.: Tom (my husband) and I were living in the Washington area, where he already had a job, and I was hired by Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University) to teach French and Spanish to deaf students. I was at Gallaudet almost 15 years as a French teacher, then Dean of Arts and Humanities, and then Provost: as a confirmed language "geek," I particularly enjoyed learning and using American Sign Language. At the time of Gallaudet’s “Deaf President Now” protests, we were getting ready to move to France, where I served as president of the American University of Paris. It was a wonderful opportunity to spend four years in the city I had learned to love during my junior year abroad, and particularly to give our son, then eight years old, a real chance to become bilingual. But certainly my years at NFLC (where I arrived in 1996 as a visiting fellow and never left!) have been absolutely fascinating and tremendously rewarding. In particular, NFLC has given me the opportunity to look at national issues related to our needs for languages other than English (as well as for ESL) and how we can build a strong educational infrastructure for language learning in the US, both in K-12 – our focus in the STARTALK project – and for adult professionals through well-crafted language learning resources. US language policy is particularly challenging because the US deals with almost every nation in the world in one way or another – but many Americans also seem to believe that the whole world speaks English. (On that subject, I’m fond of quoting former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, who said that he was happy for the US to speak English when buying from Germany; but if the US wanted to sell to Germany, it would have to do so in English!)

What does it take, in your opinion, to be a successful leader in the environment of foreign language teaching and especially LCTLs?
That’s a tough question, because I think it is mostly a matter of grasping opportunities that arise in many different ways. US education is incredibly de-centralized. World languages do not get nearly the same level of policy attention that math and English language arts receive, and I think that’s in large part due to the high value of English as a lingua franca, on the one hand, and the unpredictability of which language(s) an American may have a need for. The languages of STARTALK (Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Persian, Turkish, Swahili and Urdu) are representative of a much larger number of languages taught in US government language training programs based on federal assessments of languages in which the US needs capability. And since these are mostly languages that are not proximate to English, assuring program effectiveness is particularly important. One of the most interesting aspects of the project has been to look for factors that contribute to success in programs – particularly in terms of student achievement, but also in terms of student motivation for further learning of the language.

What advice would you give to the field of LCTL instruction in order to ensure the quality of language education especially in these changing times with technology?
This is a really tough question- I really had to give it some thought. I’m assuming that a US student tackling a LCTL is more likely than not to have a teacher who is an educated native speaker of the target language. On the other hand, world/foreign languages are not
a subject matter of primary focus in most US schools and colleges, and I’m guessing that a sizeable proportion of teachers of LCTLs have had only limited methods training for language teaching. So I’d like us to think of ways to pool resources to assure that, wherever a learner is tackling a LCTL, s/he will be provided with well-crafted learning experiences that are appropriate to the learner’s current level of skill and knowledge and that will advance him/her toward accomplishing his learning objectives. And I’m not sure we currently have the resources in place to help local instructors to support their learners in attaining skills relevant to their communication needs. I’m guessing that a common need of LCTL teachers is some guidance in curriculum planning; in providing instruction, mentored practice and constructive, useful feedback; and in assessing student learning in ways that describe what and how well the learner can communicate in that language.

As I say this, I guess I’m somewhat assuming that many learners have a particular need to learn a given LCTL: that is, they have identified - or been given - some set of communicative tasks that they will need to be able to handle in a future setting. If not, they would benefit from being able to focus their initial efforts on learning language that they might use in a situation that they can imagine actually experiencing. So, one tool for instructors/conversation partners that would be very helpful would be some careful guidance in how to develop scenarios for language development that engage and motivate the learner, and how to scaffold lessons and tasks from simple to more complex language appropriately, in as meaningful and plausible and engaging a context as possible. Almost by definition, a less commonly-taught language field has access to a relatively smaller group of trained language educators and fewer well-crafted learning resources, and even fewer professional development opportunities for instructors of that language. Might we agree on and promote a framework for training LCTL instructors/conversation partners that identifies and explains key concepts and effective practices in language teaching and learning? This is needed especially for those early levels when most US learners have relatively little experience and therefore less well-developed strategies for autonomous learning. And particularly in college settings, LCTL classrooms may include learners with a huge range of prior experience with the language. So in summary, I would hope to see wider access to support for local teachers of LCTLs in all settings that provides help in using effective techniques for teaching diverse learners who may have very different reasons/needs for learning a given language.

Dr. Ingold presented the 2014 Walton Award to Dr. Bokamba
As you look at the teaching of LCTLs in America, how do you see the future of these languages?

In today’s global society, I can’t imagine that needs in the US will decrease for education and training in a wide and unpredictable range of LCTLs. The best “insurance” for strong LCTL capability and high quality programs is for the field to agree on effective practices, and to develop and make accessible sound guidance on selecting and developing learning content and teacher development resources. My dream would be a rich web-based resource that provides illustrations in a range of languages of sound methods and practices for planning and delivery of language training applicable to a range of settings and circumstances – along with solid guidance and examples for effective and intensive teacher training when the need for teaching a new language arises or suddenly expands. What better home for such a project than NCOLCTL?

- Interviewed by Wafa Hassan

Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA

The year of 2014 witnessed another year of success and growth for the Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA. By the end of the year, it has close to 900 individual members and 14 affiliated regional Chinese language teachers associations. It offers 10 different grants and awards for its members, and publishes its journal and newsletter three times a year, and occasional monographs. The following are some highlighted accomplishments in the past year:

Name Adjustment
To better reflect the geographical location of CLTA, the association’s name “Chinese Language Teachers Association” is now tagged with USA. So, the new name is “Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA.” This adjustment was endorsed by the majority vote of the members.

Old Journal and New Journal
Starting from 2016, the CLTA’s journal will be published by John Benjamins Publishing Company. The name of the journal is suggested to be changed from the Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association (JCLTA) to Chinese as a Second Language -- the Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA. In addition, a new on-line journal will be launched in 2015, focusing on publishing articles on K-12 Chinese teaching.

2014 Annual Conference
The Chinese Language Teachers Association, USA (CLTA) successfully held its 2014 annual conference in conjunction with ACTFL in San Antonio, Texas on Nov. 21-23, 2014. The conference featured 70 panels, 11 roundtable discussions, and 4 poster sessions with about 250 presenters covering a variety of topics related to Chinese teaching and learning at different levels in various contexts. The conference sponsored two workshops on instructional strategies in Chinese classrooms and technology-assisted Chinese teaching.
First International Symposium on Chinese Language Teaching and Learning

CLTA-sponsored First International Symposium on Chinese Language Teaching and Learning was successfully held at Indiana University - Bloomington in October 2014. About 300 researchers and instructors from all over the world attended the symposium. The second symposium will be held at the University of Maryland in March 2016.

New Leadership

The beginning of 2015 welcomed some new changes in the leadership. With Prof. Yee-Fen Chen stepping down as the Executive Director, Prof. John Jing-hua Yin took over the task of overseeing the daily routines of the Association, and the CLTA Headquarters moved to the University of Vermont. In the year of 2015, Prof. Chengzhi Chu from the University of California, Davis was elected to serve as the President of the Association to lead the Board and general members to continue the tradition and launch new initiatives.

2014 NCOLCTL StarTalk Professional Development Program July 7 – 25, 2014

The 2014 NCOLCTL Swahili StarTalk program was held July 7-25. This three-week program primarily featured Swahili instructors from various institutions and organizations in the United States. During the first week of the 2014 NCOLCTL Swahili STARTALK program, patrons participated in an online teacher training course which introduced them to the various theoretical concepts frequently used in the field of LCTL. The initial week of online training was a required component that introduced participants to several theories of LCTL. Afterwards, the online participants traveled to Indiana University - Bloomington on the 14th of July for two weeks of rigorous onsite training. The onsite training was directed by three master instructors: Dr. Antonia Schleicher (program director), Dr. Alwiya S. Omar (lead instructor), and Dr. John Kiarie Wa’Njogu (instructor). In addition, Dr. Esther Mukewa Lisanza, one of the former Swahili STARTALK trainees, was prepared as a master instructor.

On the first day of the onsite training, Dr. Antonia Schleicher opened the program by introducing participants to Backward Curriculum Design. Next, she introduced participants to numerous second language acquisition theories and standards. Each lesson stressed the importance of using target language, contextual teaching language lessons, as well as instructions on how to create effective lesson plans for individuals
Instructors, Dr. Schleicher, Dr. Omar, Dr. WaNjogu, and Dr. Mukewa Lisanza performed demonstrations using several African languages, such as Yoruba, Kikamba, and Kikuyu, by placing these languages in context for the participants so that they may adapt these concepts to their micro-teaching. Participants were also given several exercises and activities to help them improve their lesson planning and teaching skills.

During the second week of the onsite training, volunteer students (mostly from Indiana University-Bloomington) who were selected through interviews, aided the learning experience by allowing participants to practice their recently learned theoretical knowledge on actual students. Each participant developed several teaching demonstrations and taught them to the volunteer students. Once they finished their lessons, participants were able to receive valuable feedback from colleagues, instructors, and volunteer students. Participants were expected to use this feedback to help them improve their teaching skills and future lesson plans. They also received feedback from colleagues and instructors and used it to elevate their lesson planning and teaching skills. At the end of the program, an awards ceremony followed by a dinner was held to conclude this intensive three-week program.

During the ceremony, participants and volunteer students performed songs and poems in Kiswahili. Three participants also had the opportunity to share highlights of their training and experiences from the 2014 NCOLCTL Swahili STARTALK program, and another participant provided the vote of thanks.

Among others, the participants commended the student volunteers for their helpful feedback.

On July 25th, the participants and the student volunteers received certificates of completion from NCOLCTL. They were awarded by Dr. Antonia Schleicher, Executive Director of NCOLCTL, and Director of the Center for Language Excellence at Indiana University-Bloomington.

**Bernard Theuri** - Indiana University, Bloomington

**David Irungu** - University of Mississippi

**Kennedy Onyancha** - Umoja Heritage Learners, Michigan

**Kevin Wamalwa** - University of Wisconsin, Madison

**Mokaya Bosire** - University of Oregon

**Raphael Birya** - Indiana University of Pennsylvania

**Veronica Waweru** - Southern Connecticut University

### Arabic Teachers’ Councils

Arabic Teachers’ Councils are regional learning communities of Arabic teachers that meet for professional development, networking, and events about Arabic language and Arab culture. The councils strengthen local Arabic programs by providing a forum for Arabic teachers to network, collaborate, and share innovative approaches to teaching, as well as to provide outreach to administrators, teachers, and the community. The councils are an essential step in furthering the goal of strengthening and professionalizing the field
of Arabic language education. The Arabic Teachers’ Councils are supported by annual grants from Qatar Foundation International (QFI). Since 2012, QFI has established and supported Arabic Teachers’ Councils in five metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, Chicago, Michigan, Washington, D.C., and New York. Highlights of the Teachers’ Councils activities include the following:

**Southern California Arabic Language Teachers’ Council- California World Language Project at Occidental College**
The Southern California Arabic Language Teachers’ Council organizes conferences, workshops, discussions, and cultural events for Arabic language teachers across Southern California. Arabic language educators from a variety of K-16 institutions meet, network, and share resources and ideas about teaching Arabic. Their statewide conference attracted 170 Arabic teachers from California and neighboring states. Approximately 350 people attended the “Taste of Arabic Language and Cultures” event, which featured student performances, Arab food, calligraphy, games, art, and a cultural show with Arabic music and dance.

**Chicago Arabic Teachers’ Council- DePaul University**
The Chicago Arabic Teachers’ Council provides training, professional development, cultural events, and networking opportunities while supporting teacher certification in Arabic and encouraging educators to join the field of teaching Arabic. The council has provided Oral Proficiency Interview training to Arabic teachers and encouraged teachers to pursue OPI certification. Their conference on Arabic literature brought together K-12 educators, university professors, community members, writers, and members of the literary field to discuss the role of literature in teaching Arabic. Funding also supports the TAFL Journal, which covers issues related to Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language and is published in Arabic.

**Michigan Arabic Teachers’ Council- Western Michigan University**
The Michigan Arabic Teachers’ Council serves more than 300 teachers of Arabic concentrated in the Detroit metro area, including Dearborn. Based on demand, activities have consisted of meetings and a symposium on teaching the Arabic language. The symposium presented topics including the three modes of communication, technology integration, and materials development.

A survey of council members served as the basis of an academic article on Arabic teachers’ professional development needs in Michigan.

**Washington, DC Metro Area Arabic Teachers’ Council- George Mason University**
The Washington DC Metro Area Arabic Teachers’ Council holds regular workshops for Arabic teachers in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. Workshops have centered on technology and iPads, Arabic curricula, classroom management, resource sharing, and teaching Arabic online. The council provides carefully structured learning sequences, including face-to-face and online blended communities of practice that provide critical methodological training.
New York Arabic Teachers’ Council- Global Language Project

The New York Arabic Teachers’ Council serves the greater New York area, including New Jersey and Connecticut. The council organizes conferences, networking events, and speakers to support the professional development of Arabic teachers, while also promoting greater access to learning about Arab culture. Conference themes are chosen by members, and topics have included authentic materials in the classroom, student portfolios, student engagement, resource exchanges, and technology.

Standards Workshop at the Ho-Chunk Nation

NALRC Executive Director, Dr. Antonia Schleicher, trained 9 language instructors of the Ho-Chunk Nation, one of the strongest indigenous native tribes in the United States, from July 28th to Aug. 1st, 2014. The workshop took place at the Nation’s headquarters in Black River Falls, Wisconsin. Since the 90s, the Ho-Chunk Nation Language and Culture Program have worked with Ho-Chunk language instructors to revive its language, Hocak that is facing a threat of extinction, by teaching it to the younger Ho-Chunk people.

This workshop aimed at equipping the Hocak language instructors with the necessary skills to strengthen the teaching and learning of the Less Commonly Taught Language. The five-day professional development workshop focused on the introduction to national standards for foreign language learning, modes of communication, backward curriculum design, the 5 C’s and proficiency guidelines and targets.

Workshop participants first learned about proficiency targets and the importance of establishing targets before designing the curriculum. Throughout the workshop, Dr. Schleicher provided vivid examples to demonstrate ways of developing curricular pathways for achieving the established proficiency targets, and also taught instructors how to design mode-specific instructional activities. Each lesson stressed the importance of using target language, teaching a class in the cultural context of the native speakers, as well as instructions on how to create effective lesson plans for the instructors.

During the workshop, Dr. Antonia Schleicher introduced the participants to Backward Curriculum Design and numerous second language acquisition models. She performed teaching demonstrations using Yoruba as a language of instruction by placing the language in context for the participants so that they may adapt these concepts in their micro teachings. Participants were also given several exercises and activities to boost their teaching skills and lesson planning.

The participants had an opportunity to practice what they had learnt through their micro-teachings while hearing feedback from their colleagues. Participants were expected to use the feedback to help them improve their teaching skills and future lesson plans. As instructors of a language that is facing a threat of extinction, the instructors also learnt methods to best preserve the Hocak Language by recording and documenting the Ho-chunk
elders as sources of authentic materials to use for their language classes.

Feedback from the participants towards the workshop showed that the participants greatly benefited and that they had been introduced to new concepts in language teaching and learning that they did not know. They enthused at the how greatly the acquired knowledge is going to improve their teaching.

The following instructors benefited from the training.

Carlyle Greendeer
Julia Goodbear
Rosie Goodbear
Angelica Greendeer
Dana DeBoer
Jerod Stacy
Terry Hindsley-Lujan
Arlene Blackdeer
Samson Falcon

Samuel in Use: An Elementary Textbook of Language and Culture
- by Anousha Sedighi

LUP Textbooks
ISBN 9789087282172 | Page extent 400 | Format Paperback, full colour | Price € 69.50

Persian in Use is an elementary Persian language and culture textbook designed for first year Persian language students at college level. It offers a thematically organized and integrative approach to help students achieve proficiency in Persian language and culture.

Features:

Colorful and beautiful design with over 200 illustrations and images and over 1200 words and phrases including high-frequency idioms, slang, and proverbs

New vocabulary is summarized thematically/lexically to help students engage in the accompanying communicative activities

Interactive dialogues from everyday life in both spoken and written forms introduce students to contemporary usage

Straightforward explanations of the grammatical features.
Includes samples of literary texts, poems, plays, film scripts, and pop song

Engaging classroom activities and homework exercises with the integration of all four skills

Companion website with audio files and authentic video clips from Iran

Corresponds to two semesters/three quarters of elementary college-level study as recommended by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Reviews
With a steady stream of relevant dialogues, a series of pithy passages of reading material, glimpses of Persian culture and literature, and plenty of engaging exercises, all creatively conceptualized and methodically presented, Persian in Use is bound to find a prominent place in the increasingly professionalized field of Persian language pedagogy.

- Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, University of Maryland.

To be forthright, teaching Persian as a second language is still far from an established field. Sedighi’s Persian in Use with its fresh approach, tasteful design, and engaging methodology is a welcome publication in response to this perpetual need. The book indeed is designed to improve student’s language and cultural fluency, delightfully and systematically.

- Kamran Talattof, Professor of Near Eastern Studies, University of Arizona.

NCOLCTL Celebrates 25 Years

Richard D. Brecht

Being present at the creation of NCOLCTL and through its infancy, I offer here a few personal perspectives on its development. A detailed, formal history needs to be written, but that is not my purpose here. Rather, I would like to focus on its mission and the people whose personal dedication made possible this great organization to take hold and grow.

In January, 1987, the newly founded National Foreign Language Center took as its initial activity the convening at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) Washington D.C. of a national meeting on policy guidelines for Title VI of the newly reauthorized Higher Education Act. Invitees were from the Department of Education, higher education, private foundations, business, and area studies, as well as from a range of LCTL languages. (Bokamba 2002) The discussion started with Dick Lambert’s famous “my village” tactic, where all attendees described their reasons for attending and their professional challenges. People were somewhat surprised at the discouraging state of their much neglected “critical languages” as well as the resulting acknowledgement that these LCTLs shared similar if not identical challenges, including a lack of public support, poor or non-existent materials and curricula, little teacher training, few summer and in-country programs, and for many no professional organizations to help address these challenges. This discussion was followed by Lambert’s “Passover question”: What is different about this time, i.e. the end of the 1980s and, more broadly, fin de siècle? The answers to this question emerged slowly over an ever more vigorous give and take: the increasing...
global competitiveness provoked by Japan’s economic miracle; the portending seeds of terrorist actions; immigration and the growing significance of the nation’s heritage communities; and, the rising tide of “globalization” broadly writ. In a word, this time was different because of the emerging relevance of languages that were long neglected by the education system of the United States. So many new insights were gleaned in this discussion that the language people left the conference determined to meet again, regularly, in order to continue the learning process.

And so we did. The “National Conference of LCTLs” emerged as a vehicle to bring together a broader representation of LCTLs to meet again in 1988 and 1989. These meetings produced a consensus to establish a formal umbrella organization to ensure regular meetings and to strengthen the architecture of the LCTL fields that could help each language field meet the challenges of inadequate materials, curricula, teachers, and public support. So, in 1990 was established the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages whose membership comprised LCTL organizations focused on field-building and language policy. Thus began a decade-long effort, housed at the NFLC, aimed at “collective solutions to common problems,” which was implemented through a series of projects aimed at serving the broadest possible range of its constituent member LCTL organizations. (Lioba Moshi, 2003)

To fund the effort, a small group of us went to New York City and made a pitch to the Ford Foundation. In our eyes it was a simple bet: Ford Foundation wagers a significant amount of money that such a disparate set of languages, cultures, personalities cannot be unified in a common endeavor, and we wager our best efforts for the next decade against that support to prove that view wrong. The odds were not in our favor, as our program officer, Peter Stanley, made it clear that he had worked with the language and area studies communities for many years and saw little evidence that shook his confidence in winning the wager. I cannot say that that the process in its early stages was always easy; we had our disagreements. However, I likewise cannot say that it was difficult, as the “mission impossible” challenge made colleagues and friends of us all, united in the common pursuit of a better environment for the LCTLs with significant benefits for each and all residents of this country.

Obviously, we won the bet: The first decade of the Council’s existence, accomplished the following:

• Created a strong identity and unified the LCTL field in the United States
• Established the NCOLCTL as the principal national voice for the LCTLs in the educational field and among federal agencies
• Helped organize individual LCTL fields and assisted in founding national language-specific organizations, including those for African,
Central Asian, Middle Eastern, Chinese (Cantonese), and South East Asian languages;
• Defined common problems and organized collective solutions among the LCTLs, including field-wide “language learning frameworks” to guide the development of curricula, materials, and teacher training;
• Developed a national communication and resource sharing system for the LCTLs;
• Influenced federal legislation to support the LCTLs;
• Began to establish a national community of teachers of the LCTLs.

These early initiatives laid the basis for the organization’s ongoing efforts: annual conferences and assemblies, teacher training, research, data collection, the NCOLCTL Journal & newsletter, as well as organizational support. Just recently, the “7000 Languages” project has been launched in partnership with Transparent Language, LLC, constituting another bold effort to make available to everyone instruction in any language.

All this has been accomplished because of the commitment of many remarkable leaders in the language field. The litany of the NCOLCTL builders is long, and at risk of offending many, I will mention only a few present at the birth and pre-pubescence, without whom this child would never have grown into the warrior it is today: At the NFLC, Dick Lambert and my partner and friend, Ron Walton; Teresita Ramos, NCOLCTL’s 1st president and Eyamba Bokamba, her Vice President and the 2nd President of the Association; Erika Gilson, Lioba Moshi and David Dwyer, prime movers in the Language Learning Framework effort; Antonia Folarin-Schleicher, the founder of the NALRC and prime mover in the National NCOLCTL conferences; a cadre of field leaders like Scott McGinnis, Rick Jackson, Kirk Belnap; and of course Peter Stanley and Sheila Biddle of the Ford Foundation.

Finally, I would like to comment on the place of the Council in “America’s Languages” in the 21st Century. As identified by recently departed Joshua Fishman, these include indigenous, post-colonial, immigrant, and (I now add) world languages. These languages are both demanded and supplied by the academic, government, industry, heritage, and NGO sectors, all five of which are unified under the sobriquet of the “Language Enterprise.” The NCOLCTL de facto serves all these languages and sectors. The 25th anniversary of the Council serves as an opportunity to reach out and to join hands with this country’s language organizations and sectors in a major effort to continue to make any and all languages available to each and every learner in this country who wants the advantage of a second or third language. Our society is more and more becoming like the rest of the world in being culturally and linguistically diverse, and it needs the leadership and collaboration of this organization to speed this transition into the 21st century. The mission first defined by its founders continues, and the dedicated people who are now part of this remarkable organization have a tradition to uphold.

References


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