

## The Director's Column

*25 years: A Retrospective*

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Dear Friends of the NCLRC,

I am sad to tell you that this will be the last issue of *The Language Resource*. After 25 years of operation, the National Capital Language Resource Center will close its operations on July 31, 2015. However, all of its current resources for language educators will remain available at [www.nclrc.org](http://www.nclrc.org), which is now housed at the George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

I would like to express my deep appreciation for all the contributions that Sheila W. Cockey has made as Editor of *The Language Resource*. Her creativity, enthusiasm, talent, and leadership have made our e-newsletter a valuable source of information about current issues in language education, as well as a treasure trove of ideas, teaching techniques, assessment approaches, technology, and real classroom challenges and solutions. Sheila joins me in expressing our gratitude to all of our contributors through the years – and especially to our regular contributors: Margaret Gonglewski, Anna Helm, Marcel LaVergne, Sylvia Lillehoj, Carol Marcolini, Christine Meloni, Jill Robbins, John Ross, Belinda Saurat, Jamie, Suria, Laurie Smith, various CAL contributors, and YANA.

Established in 1990, the NCLRC's focus has been on meeting the national need for the expansion and improvement of foreign language education by reaching out to all foreign and world language teachers and instructors across the United States. For its first six years, this Language Resource Center was operated by Georgetown University and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), with the late James E. Alatis as its founding Director. During this period we conducted research on second language acquisition, much of which involved the study of language learning strategies. These studies identified the learning strategies used by effective and less effective language learners in elementary schools, high schools, and college contexts. Using the results of this research, we conducted classroom-based research with foreign language teachers to find out how teachers and students could benefit from strategy instruction. In addition to research in second language acquisition, these first years also saw the beginning of a long list of contributions to language assessment conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics.

In 1996, the George Washington University joined the consortium, with three Co-Directors: Dr. Alatis for Georgetown University, Dr. Dorry Kenyon and later Dr. Margaret M. Malone for CAL, and Dr. Anna Uhl Chamot for GWU. At this point, our focus shifted from predominantly research to professional development, with an emphasis on less-commonly-taught languages (LCTLs), assessment, and dissemination.

Under the direction and inspiration of Dr. Catharine W. Keatley, our newsletter, *The Language Resource*, was re-designed into its present format and new features began to be added through the years under the leadership of Sheila W. Cockey. We developed three learning strategy resource guides and a portfolio assessment guide for teachers, as well as *The Essentials of*

*Language Teaching* for university foreign language instructors. *The Culture Club*, conceived and edited by Christine Meloni, provided culture teaching methods and materials for teachers. More recently we have published *Teaching World Languages: A Practical Guide*, a standards-based methodology book for K-12 world language teachers, and in the next few weeks we will publish the Chinese and Arabic versions.

Under the initiative and guidance of Dr. Richard Robin, the NCLRC has also provided on its web site a series of webcasts aimed at developing listening skills for intermediate college students of Russian; later similar webcasts have been produced in Arabic and Chinese. New ones have recently been uploaded to our web site.

All of these publications and resources will continue to be available at no cost on the NCLRC website at the George Washington University ([www.nclrc.org](http://www.nclrc.org)).

The NCLRC developed networks and support for K-12 teachers of LCTLs, with a focus on Arabic and South Asian languages. Dr. Keatley also spearheaded the development of ACTFL's *National Standards for Learning Arabic* (2006) and, with the late Dora Johnson at CAL, conducted an annual survey of K-12 Arabic programs nationwide. Later, a similar survey was conducted of K-12 South Asian language programs by Anup Mahajan in collaboration with CAL.

Numerous assessment initiatives have been conducted by CAL as part of its collaboration with the NCLRC. These have included the *Foreign Language Assessment Directory*, online assessment training for teachers on using oral proficiency assessment, CAL's *Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI)*, and their *Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument (COPI)*.

Professional development for foreign language teachers has focused on Summer Institutes, workshops, and presentations at international and regional conferences such as ACTFL, AERA, NCOLCTL, and NECTFL.

The NCLRC has hosted the Annual Meeting of the East Coast Organization of Language Testers (ECOLT), and also the International Conference on Language Teacher Education in 2009 and 2013.

Throughout the years we had many graduate and undergraduate student interns from both Georgetown University and The George Washington University. Many of these interns have moved on to careers in foreign language education and assessment.

All of these activities would not have been possible without the dedication and creative efforts of the NCLRC's directors, staff, and contributors. A special thanks to the assistant and associate directors for their leadership during different periods of the life of the NCLRC: Sarah Barnhardt, Lisa Küpper, Catharine Keatley, the late Kristina Anstrom, Jill Robbins, and Anup Mahajan.

**A warm and heartfelt thank you to all of you who have made it possible for the NCLRC to fulfill its mission “to improve the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States.”**