History of NACCL:
The First Two Decades

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This is a brief history of the North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL) on its the twentieth anniversary, piecing together information from various sources.[1] The story begins in mid-May 1988, the year that The Ohio State University was hosting the third of its series of conferences on Chinese linguistics. That conference—the Third Ohio State University Conference on Chinese Linguistics (OSUCCL III)—was organized by Thomas Ernst (殷天兴),[2] then teaching at OSU's Department of Linguistics, in collaboration with his two colleagues in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, James H.-Y. Tai (戴浩一) and Marjorie K.M. Chan (陳潔雯).[3] Tom Ernst's recollection of the pivotal event that gave birth to NACCL is described below in his own words:

The Genesis

The genesis of NACCL took place in Columbus, Ohio, during OSUCCL III (the OSU Conference on Chinese Linguistics) in 1988. A group of participants—including Tom Ernst, Jim Huang, Jerry Packard, and Jim Tai—were enjoying dinner at a local restaurant, when it was suggested that we should keep hosting Chinese linguistics meetings on an annual basis. There was instant and enthusiastic agreement, and soon the group adopted the name NECCL (North East Conference on Chinese Linguistics), with Jim Tai agreeing to host the first meeting at OSU the following year, and Jerry Packard hosting it at the University

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[1] The history of NACCL presented here is based on what I had researched and written in August 2007 for the NACCL-20 website ("About NACCL"), with additional resourcees consulted for this piece (e.g., Tai 1989, Chan and Ernst 1989).

[2] Tom Ernst organized the First Ohio State University Conference on Chinese Linguistics (OSUCCL I) in Spring 1986. As Tai (1989:v) noted, "In spite of being the first try with limited logistic support, the conference was a real success in that many stimulating discussions were generated and many interesting questions wre posed. More significantly, it germinated keen interest and enthusiasm among Chinese linguists at The Ohio State University to hold another meeting in the following year." The second event, which took place in Spring 1987, was hosted by Frank Hsueh and James H.-Y. Tai (the latter then a visiting faculty member). It was named the Ohio Symposium on Chinese Linguistics, with the theme of "Functionalism and Chinese Grammar." (The papers from that symposium were later edited as a monograph by Tai and Hsueh (1989).

[3] The papers from OSUCCL III were subsequently collected for a Proceedings volume that was edited by Chan and Ernst (1989).

of Pennsylvania the year after that. The name was changed to (NACCL) North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics to indicate the reality of its wider geographical scope, and for the next few years the meeting site continued its rotation to universities represented by participants at that first meeting: Cornell University (Jim Huang), University of Michigan (Bill Baxter and Duanmu San), University of Delaware (Tom Ernst) and USC (Audrey Li).

— Thomas Ernst (Email of 31 July 2008)

Based on the reconstructed history, the precursor of the NACCL conference series was a series of three conferences/symposia hosted in three consecutive years at The Ohio State University:

Spring 1986:   The First Ohio State University Conference on Chinese Linguistics (OSUCCL I), organized by Thomas Ernst.

Spring 1987:   The Ohio Symposium on Chinese Linguistics, organized by Frank F.S. Hsueh and James H.-Y.Tai.

Spring 1988:   The Third Ohio State University Conference on Chinese Linguistics (OSUCCL III), organized by Thomas Ernst, James H.-Y. Tai, and Marjorie K.M. Chan.

In his Preface to the *Proceedings of the Third Ohio State University Conference on Chinese Linguistics (13-14 May 1988),* Tai (1989:v) wrote the following concerning OSUCCL III:

Because of the interest generated during the conference, it was decided that a regional conference on Chinese linguistics, named the Northeastern Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NECCL), be held annually. A Consortium of four universities—Cornell University, University of Delaware, University of Pennsylvania, and The Ohio State University—was formed to rotate in hosting the annual meetings. Ohio State will be hosting the first one in Spring 1989.

The hosts of the four universities in that Consortium would be C.-T. James Huang (黃正德), then at Cornell University; Thomas Ernst, who was going to be at University of Delaware beginning Autumn 1988; Jerome L. Packard (裴吉瑞), then at University of Pennsylvania; and James H.-Y. Tai and Marjorie K.M. Chan at The Ohio State University.

From that dinner at a local restaurant in Columbus in Spring 1988, an annual regional conference on Chinese linguistics was founded, to be hosted by different universities in the northeast region on a rotating basis. That decision gave birth to the Northeast Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NECCL), which would evolve just two years later into the North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL).

As was decided, in spring 1989, the year after OSUCCL III, Ohio State University hosted the First Northeast Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NECCL-1). James H.-Y. Tai (now at National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan), as the senior member, together with Marjorie K.M. Chan and their new colleague, Robert Sanders (沈德思, now at Auckland University in New Zealand), formed the trio that hosted the conference.[4] Note that although the conference was initially conceived as a regional, northeastern conference, NECCL-1 drew scholars and students from well beyond the confines of the northeast, with participants from all over the United States as well as from abroad.

The second NECCL conference was held at the University of Pennsylvania, hosted by Jerome L. Packard, now at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (where, incidentally, he helped to co-host NACCL-8 with his then-senior colleague, Chin-chuan Cheng (鄭錦全)). These early conferences were well-received and attracted participants from all over the United States and beyond.

One important reason for the tremendous interest in NECCL is that there simply was no other conference series anywhere in the world at that time that was dedicated solely to the presentation of research on Chinese linguistics. (Thus, NACCL has, since its birth, embraced both theoretical and empirical research, and all subfields of Chinese linguistics.) The formation of the NACCL conference series, hence, met a serious need in the field. The closest counterparts were such conferences as the annual International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics and the annual meeting of the Chinese Language Teachers Association, both with different scope and foci.

By the third conference—hosted by C-T. James Huang, currently at Harvard University but at Cornell University at the time of hosting that conference—there was strong interest among the participants to expand the geographical scope of the conference to the rest of the United States and to adopt a new name to reflect that extended geographical territory. With an amendment suggested by this author to include her home country of Canada, NECCL underwent a very meaningful, sound-symbolic name change from NECCL to NACCL—to become the North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics.

NACCL has thrived in the intervening years through the dedication of scholars in Chinese linguistics who generously donated their time and energy to host the NACCL conferences. This can be seen in the list compiled by Yen-hui Audrey Li (李艷惠) of past NACCL conferences, posted at the USC website with information on venues and past organizers.[5] (For ease of reference, that list, with some minor adjustments, is included here as an Appendix.)

An important development came in 1994 with Audrey Li's hosting of NACCL-6 and the publication of a NACCL proceedings. The inaugural, two-volume set of NACCL-6 Proceedings was published in 1995 under Audrey Li's supervision, paving the way for

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[4] For a report on NECCL-1, see Chan (1989).

[5] URL: <http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/ealc/chinling/html/naccl.htm>.

a series that has continued to the present. Past NACCL Proceedings volumes are distributed by the Graduate Students in Linguistics at the University of Southern California through their GSIL Publications website.[6] Upon the recommendation of Audrey Li, beginning with the *Proceedings of the 20th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL-20),* NACCL proceedings will henceforth be in electronic form and disseminated online for ease of production and easier access by a wider readership.

Over the past decade and a half, since the early 1990's, the World Wide Web ("the Web") has revolutionized how information is released to the world community.[7] While the NACCL Proceedings recorded the scholarly achievements over the years since 1994, on another front, NACCL hosts soon began to harness the World Wide Web for information dissemination. Not surprisingly, the first NACCL host to utilize the Web was none other than Chin-chuan ("CC") Cheng (鄭錦全), one of our most esteemed—and computer-savvy —Chinese linguists, who was also strategically located at the University of Illinois, the birthplace of first web browser, Mosaic, the precursor to Netscape (Mozilla). Since NACCL-8 (1996), every NACCL conference has been posted online for wide dissemination of information. In 2008, twelve years since the first NACCL conference had a web presence, only four NACCL conference websites are still available online, constituting roughly one-third of the websites created for the NACCL conference series.[8] The four NACCL conferences that still have home pages are NACCL-14 (2002), NACCL-18 (2006), NACCL-19/IACL-15 (2007), and the current conference, NACCL-20 (2008).[9]

The continued success of NACCL has also depended on the passing of the baton each year. On that, a great deal of debt is owed to NACCL-5 host then at the University of Delaware, Tom Ernst, who took the important step of establishing a NACCL Steering Committee that consisted of past NACCL hosts, and guided the committee to assist "newbie" NACCL organizers. He also ensured that there would be a succession of NACCL

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[6] URL: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/gsil/list.html#NACCL_Proceedings>.

[7] As Chan (2003:50, fn.3) documented, "The World Wide Web portion of the Internet made its debut in 1991, and by November 1991, Mosaic, the first WWW browser for all three major computing platforms (PC, Macintosh, Unix), was released. Netscape followed in 1994 and Internet Explorer the year after."

[8] There were seven NACCL conference websites when NACCL-20 went online, but only four remained by September 2008, including NACCL-20. Although the NACCL-11 (1999) website at Harvard University has been removed, NACCL-22 (2010) will be held there in conjunction with the 18th Annual Meeting of the International Association of Chinese Linguistics (IACL-18). We can expect to see a new NACCL/IACL conference website posted at Harvard in a year's time.

[9] The URLs are as follows:

NACCL-14 (2002): <http://www.pshap.com/naccl/>
NACCL-18 (2006): <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/mcl/naccl18/>
NACCL-19/IACL-15 (2007): <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ealac/chinese/events.htm>
NACCL-20 (2008): <http://chinalinks.osu.edu/naccl-20/>

hosts. Through his efforts, NACCL was held annually, and individual organizers bene-fited in being able to consult previous hosts, so that much collegial, behind-the-scenes teamwork exists in the hosting of NACCL conferences. Tom Ernst has continued in the capacity of NACCL Steering Committee Chair until the conclusion of NACCL-20. At the NACCL Steering Committee Meeting chaired by Tom during NACCL-20, attended by two other committee members (Audrey Li and Yen-Hwei Lin),[10] eight past NACCL hosts (Marjorie Chan, San Duanmu, Qian Gao, Baozhang He, Jerry Packard, Chaofen Sun, James Tai, and Robert Sanders), and the following year's host (Yun Xiao)—that is, those who were attending NACCL-20—Tom announced that he was stepping down from his long chairmanship of the Steering Committee. At the end of the discussion that followed, Marjorie Chan agreed to serve in that capacity for a three-year term, with Tom agreeing to stay on as a member of the NACCL Steering Committee to give continued assistance. Our heartfeltl thanks to Tom Ernst for his dedication in chairing the NACCL Steering Committee over the past two decades!

We look forward to new and exciting research that will be presented at the annual NACCL conferences in the years ahead, and we look forward to collaborations with the International Association of Chinese Linguistics (IACL) in hosting joint conferences when IACL meetings are held in North America.

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[10] The NACCL Steering Committee includes three other members: Yafei Li, Hua Lin, and Zheng-sheng Zhang.

Appendix:
NACCL Conferences (1989-2008)

Year	Conference	Host Institution	Organizers
1989	NECCL-1	The Ohio State University	James H.-Y. Tai Marjorie K.M. Chan Robert Sanders
1990	NECCL-2	University of Pennsylvania	Jerome L. Packard
1991	NACCL-3	Cornell University	C.-T. James Huang
1992	NACCL-4	University of Michigan	William H. Baxter San Duanmu
1993	NACCL-5	University of Delaware	Thomas Ernst
1994	NACCL-6	Univ. of Southern California	Yen-hui Audrey Li
1995	NACCL-7/ ICCL-4	Univ. of Wisconsin at Madison	Tsai-Fa Cheng Yafei Li Hongming Zhang
1996	NACCL-8	U. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Chin-chuan Cheng Jerome L. Packard
1997	NACCL-9	University of Victoria, Canada	Hua Lin
1998	NACCL-10/ IACL-7	Stanford University	Chaofen Sun
1999	NACCL-11	Harvard University	Baozhang He
2000	NACCL-12	San Diego State University	Zhengsheng Zhang
2001	NACCL-13/ IACL-10	University of California at Irvine	C.-T. James Huang
2002	NACCL-14	University of Arizona	Feng-hsi Liu
2003	NACCL-15	Michigan State University	Yen-Hwei Lin
2004	NACCL-16	University of Iowa	Chuanren Ke
2005	NACCL-17	Monterey Language Institute	Qian Gao
2006	NACCL-18	Western Washington University	Janet Xing
2007	NACCL-19/ IACL 15	Columbia University	Lening Liu
2008	NACCL-20	The Ohio State University	Marjorie K.M. Chan