On Wednesday, October 22, 2014, the Center for Language Excellence (CLE) presented the workshop entitled “Assessing Student Oral Proficiency in the Classroom and Beyond”. The workshop had 10 attendees including five CLE/CeLT staff and language instructors from three different departments, servicing five different languages (English as a Second language, Estonian, Mongolian, Russian, and Uyghur). The presentation was led by Maria Shardakova, Director of Language Assessment for the Center for Language Excellence.

This workshop was the second of a series of workshops offered by CLE.

It opened with a brief discussion on the purpose(s) and foundational principles of assessment as applies to the foreign language classroom. It followed with participants revisiting such concepts as Backward Design, ACTFL proficiency guidelines, the National Standards for Foreign Language Education, and modes of communication. The participants were also presented with current data on foreign-language proficiency levels attained by US university students across four-years of study. During this discussion the participants completed several pop-quizzes to ensure that they have a basic understanding of main assessment concepts and principles. Then, the participants were presented with sample assessment activities and techniques appropriate for different levels of foreign language study. These activities demonstrated how to assess students’ oral development in a foreign language, including formative and summative assessment. Particular attention was given to foster students’ oral abilities through assessment by moving from controlled to open-ended tasks. The ways of raising students’ critical thinking and cultural reflection through oral assessment were also discussed.