

## ON THE NET

### Resources for Instructors and Learners of Less Commonly Taught Languages

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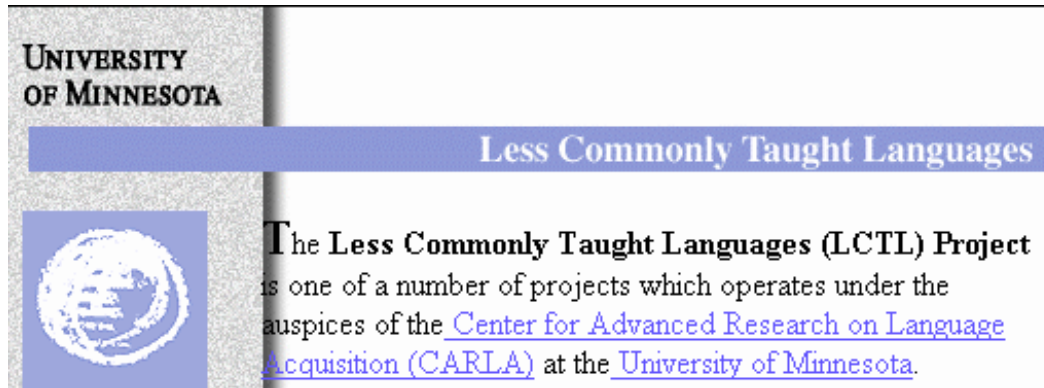
If you are a teacher of English, French, German, and/or Spanish, you have probably noticed that, comparatively, you enjoy many perks in the foreign language (FL) teaching world. First, there are many of you. You can almost always find someone else that teaches your language to pair up with in a conference session, to sit with at a regional FL luncheon, to commiserate and communicate with in your own school district. Second, you have relatively stable and sizable enrollments in many institutions of learning and are generally considered to be the "norm" -- that is, most people are not surprised when your language forms part of the school curriculum. Third, you are frequently courted by textbook publishers, and when considering a new text, you usually have a variety from which to choose. Fourth, the Internet has become a great new resource area for you, with thousands of pages of authentic materials and resources at your disposal.

Such is generally **not** the case if you are a teacher of the Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). Finding a colleague who teaches the same language can be difficult in those conference sessions, regional meetings, and forget about in your own district. You are usually a majority of one, championing the cause of "those other languages." With a few limited geographical exceptions, most people look askance when your language is proposed as an addition to the district's or the institution's curriculum. As for materials, "jet lag" or "time warp" might be terms that best describe the state of affairs, simply because it is not in the financial interests of major publishers to invest in development projects for your language. Even web-based offerings of authentic materials are more limited because there are fewer sources.

The WWW is widely recognized by FL teachers as a rich source of current authentic materials that can help make the language learning experience more interesting and rewarding. Many FL professionals around the world are preparing web-based materials for students of the aforementioned "commonly taught" languages, but the LCTLs are not benefiting from the same quantity of production for several reasons. One is access to the technology necessary to develop such materials. Much of this technology is simply not readily available to teachers of LCTLs or potential producers of materials and resources in these languages. Another is numerical: the production and distribution of LCTL teaching materials do not benefit from the economies of scale or the numbers of professionals that facilitate materials development for languages such as English, Spanish, French, and German. This leads to still another, which is economic: if the potential sales market is not large enough, the investment is not made. How, then, can teachers of LCTLs move ahead in the arena of technology and, at the same time, use it to increase their numbers, both in professional instructors and in language learners?

The **Less Commonly Taught Languages** (LCTL) Project of the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota seeks to use the Internet to address these challenges by helping teachers cooperate and by encouraging the study of LCTLs.

<http://carla.acad.umn.edu/lctl/lctl.html>



To that end, the LCTL page was created:

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and it serves as a common meeting ground for all language teachers who share an interest in language learning in general and in the study of LCTLs in particular. The LCTL page offers several useful resources for teachers of a large number of LCTLs. The various sections of the page are detailed below.

### **Course Offerings for Less Commonly Taught Languages**

The LCTL page has compiled a database of course offerings throughout the U.S. and Canada. This logical first link indicates where, in a given geographical region, instruction in a particular LCTL is given. User-friendly clickable maps enable the user to select an area in North America and locate tertiary institutions where one can study any one of thirteen LCTLs. In addition, a clickable alphabet provides links to those LCTLs not included in the maps. The database contains information on nearly 300 languages in total at some 2,000 institutions. Location, levels offered, and a contact person are available for the LCTLs.

### **Subscribing to a LCTL mailing lists**

LCTL hosts six electronic discussion groups, one of which is for general dialog among teachers of LCTLs; the remaining five are language-specific (for teachers of Celtic, Dutch, Hindi, Nordic, and Polish). These lists can prove invaluable for the LCTL teacher who lacks professional support by virtue of being a singleton in his/her institution, due to geographic isolation, or any number of job-related situations. Connecting and communicating regularly with professional colleagues is an excellent means of professional development. As announcements of sharable resources and materials, organized by the LCTL project, will be made through these lists in the future, LCTL teachers will want to keep tabs on the conversations on such fora. Step-by-step instructions on subscribing are provided at this site.

### **LCTL Summit**

The results of a survey, administered prior to the September, 1996 summit of LCTLs helds at the University of Minnesota, are detailed here. Participants responded to a series of three questions in each of the following areas: Enrollments and Communication, Teacher Education, Materials Availability, and Delivery Systems. Summaries of individual answers are provided in this summary report. The summit aimed to involve teachers and administrators from around the US in discussions of issues common to LCTL teachers and students and to propose solutions to common problems.

### **Technology Training Workshops**

The LCTL Project has been involved in several initiatives designed to enhance the teaching and learning of LCTLs through the use of computer and video technologies. Descriptions of several of these projects are available here. One project entailed the development of web exercises in Hebrew; detailed

instructions for viewing them, along with downloading the requisite software, are included. "The Teacher Development: Focus on Technology" may be of particular interest to teachers as it offers a rationale for the integration of technology in language classes as well as in language teacher preparation programs.

The final offering of the LCTLs page is a listing of resources that include:

[Less Commonly Taught Languages Organizations](#): a listing of LCTL organizations with contact information for specific languages as well as LCTL teaching in general.

[Experts Willing to Share Knowledge of Specific LCTLs](#): an "Ask the Experts" page that provides names and email addresses of people who have volunteered their time, talents, and expertise in a number of different languages to answer questions that you might have.

[How to find materials for teaching or learning LCTLs](#): though not a formal collector or distributor of LCTL materials, the project does offer here some suggestions for methods of obtaining these resources that are frequently difficult to find. Included are names and addresses of book stores and publishers that specialize in the LCTL area.

[Links for LCTLs on the World Wide Web](#): this page offers a smattering of LCTL-specific links that are considered good sources for culture and language information. The five languages of the above-mentioned discussion lists are included, as well as a few general sites. This page is meant to be a jumping off point for interested parties rather than an all-inclusive site; users are expected to branch out to other related sites from here.

For the teacher of a LCTL, the LCTL page is an excellent place to begin exploring the WWW. It is a good outgrowth of a much needed project. On several pages, site users are encouraged to add to the extant database of information provided on these pages. One can do this by contacting

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Indeed, in this way, FL teachers can connect, communicate, and assist each other in developing themselves, their materials, their enrollments, and general interest in the LCTLs.

Here are a few related WWW sites of interest to teachers of LCTLs:

- The [UCLA Language Materials Project](#) has an online Less Commonly Taught Languages materials database.
- The [Yamada Language Center](#) is a site for language study at the University of Oregon with information about more than 100 languages.
- The [Human Language Resource Page](#), by Tyler Jones, has an extensive collection of resources including many for Less Commonly Taught Languages (including Klingon).