

NAACLT 2008 Conference Presentation Abstracts

Contributor	Title & Abstract
<p>Kevin Scannell Saint Louis University</p>	<p>A grammar checking framework for the Celtic languages and its applications</p> <p>An Gramadóir is a general framework for developing language technology for minority languages and under-resourced languages. It uses a web crawler to build text corpora for many languages (more than 400 at present), and statistical methods to train important end-user tools like spelling and grammar checkers. The framework itself, and the resources built from it, are available as free software.</p> <p>We will discuss the design and construction of An Gramadóir's flagship application: a grammar checker for Irish capable of detecting many common errors in usage and most context-sensitive spelling errors involving initial mutations. In addition, it implements the spelling reforms introduced as part of the Caighdeán Oifigiúil, and can therefore be used as an automatic language "standardizer".</p> <p>The grammar checker is used widely by students of the language in Ireland; we hope to encourage teachers to use it in a more systematic way inside and outside the classroom. In addition to the obvious application (instant feedback on students' writing), it is also possible to use An Gramadóir to evaluate reading materials numerically along various axes: standard vs. non-standard, high vs. low quality, easy vs. difficult.</p> <p>Having been designed for Irish originally, An Gramadóir is well-suited for use with the other five Celtic languages, and we will present a progress report on these versions as well.</p>
<p>Brían Ó hAirt St. Louis, MO</p>	<p>Amhránaíocht in aghaidh Filíocht: Advantages of the Vernacular over the Formal</p> <p>There are many resources such as short stories, news articles, poetry, etc., which stand as alternatives for the teaching of remedial Irish Gaelic grammar, vocabulary, syntax, etc. However, some of these resources utilize formal structures of Irish seldom found in the vernacular and not often understood but by advanced students. Since Irish, as a minority language, faces the difficult challenge of maintaining its body of speakers, I posit that the teaching of the vernacular should take greater precedence within the classroom. It is my experience that students see quicker results under instructors utilizing such pedagogy due to their greater desire first and foremost to speak Irish. It is common in North America that foreign language instruction focuses primarily on literacy before fluency. The same is true for much of Ireland. Those who have passed through the Gaelscoileanna and are by all accounts fluent speakers, often fail to grasp idioms and pronunciation, which are key features of the various dialects. I have found that educational resources as mentioned before do little in supporting a proper understanding of the spoken forms of Irish. A commonly overlooked resource—song— aids the acquisition of said qualities with ease and enjoyment. Whether 'big songs' of the sean-nós tradition or 'silly songs' of childhood, these songs—oral in nature and predating the written form of Modern Irish— effectively showcase both vernacular idiom and dialect specific pronunciation.</p>

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<p>Seán O'Connor Wallingford, CT</p>	<p>Ciancheardlann 2007-2008, a writing workshop in the Irish language</p> <p>This presentation will present in detail the recruitment, prerequisites and results of Ciancheardlann 2007-2008, a writing workshop in the Irish language. Ciancheardlann can be translated as Workshop-At-A-Distance, indicating that all communication between teacher and students is via e-mail. The course, which runs from September through April, is divided into four modules, each lasting two months. Month one is devoted to the students writing a piece of their own choosing ranging from 400 to 600 words and to their receipt of a corrected version of their work. Month two involves students appraising one or more pieces of other students' uncorrected work and the replies of the authors to these appraisals. A compilation of all corrected pieces is distributed to the students at the end of modules 2 and 4. Students' reflections on the course as a whole will be requested at the end of the course and will be included in this presentation.</p>
<p>Sheila Scott University of Ottawa</p>	<p>Dictation: How to Get Into Your Students' Heads</p> <p>Dictations can reveal far more than simply whether or not your students know how to spell words correctly. Dictations, the dreaded Friday activity that occurred in primary school has numerous applications and comes in several guises. In this paper, I will show that in addition to revealing certain information about our students' misspellings, the dictation is an excellent tool for working on listening comprehension, aspects of pronunciation, the processing of thought groups, word segmentation, reading and speaking. Student errors at the syntactic and morphological levels can help the teacher identify areas which remain unclear and / or difficult for the students. It provides a window into what the students have heard and have processed based on their working knowledge of the second language. A sample of errors taken from English and Irish second language classes will be used to support these claims and to demonstrate the range of possible formats for dictation activities.</p>
<p>Margaret McGrath State University of New York at Buffalo</p>	<p>Erection of Bilingual Street Signs in Buffalo, New York</p> <p>This presentation will describe an 'Irish culture and heritage awareness' project in Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The Buffalo Irish Center is located in South Buffalo. As the result of Erie County cultural grants received by Mary Heneghan (Chairperson of the Irish Center) and Goin' South, (a South Buffalo fraternal organization) bilingual (Irish/ English) street signs were erected in an area that surrounds the Center. This presentation will describe: the nature of the grants; objective of the project; the translation work conducted by Scoil Cultúr na hÉireann and University of Buffalo Irish class students; the street name research facilitated by Tom Caulfield (a SC na hÉ student and Goin' South member) and his SC na hÉ classmates; the phonetic sheets developed by SC na hÉ and UB students with accompanying CD; a cinematography project addressing the erection of these signs by three UB students</p>

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<p>John Donahue Concordia University</p>	<p>Ireland in Proverbs</p> <p>A sizable number of books have been published over the years on the topic of proverbs ... Making collections of proverbs has been one of the projects of the Irish government and from these collections gleaned from the countryside of Ulster, and other provinces, shorter collections often accompanied by handsome illustrations have been issued. This paper will look at the range of topics in the more popular collection with some commentary on the similarity / differences with similar collections of proverbs for other countries.</p>
<p>Colleen Dollard Trinity College, Dublin</p>	<p>Murder in the Classroom</p> <p>A startling title, and a strange concept: learning via murder, yes. And though promoting murder seems inherently wrong, this paper will explain how effective our murder mystery dinner events and projects have been as entertaining learning tools both in the classroom and in the Irish-speaking community in Dublin. Having just finished our eighth murderous event, we feel that it is time to let others in on our dirty secret ...</p> <p>English-language box dinner party kits have been used as the basis for task-based learning projects and oral exams for Trinity College's Irish language module courses for the past three years to great effect. Participants in these courses were mostly first-year students, with varying levels of fluency in Irish, working together on group projects in Irish as a means of improving their language skills. Their final term task was to produce a murder mystery dinner party event conducted completely in Irish. The events were filmed and an external examiner evaluated their language ability while they combed through character relationships, events and clues to find out whodunit!</p> <p>These projects were also used as Irish language community dinner party events during Seachtain na Gaeilge in Dublin and proved to be valuable in drawing people from different Irish language circles together, linking learners and seasoned fluent speakers of all ages in the process.</p> <p>This paper will thoroughly illustrate the benefits and challenges encountered during these past eight events. In particular, how the use of role-play in a simulated scenario of pleasant panic gently forces participants to explain themselves— to prove their innocence or disguise their guilt— through the target language. It will provide guidelines and examples showing how these kits could be used successfully and hilariously in a variety of language-learning and speaking communities.</p>

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<p>Janet Muller POBAL and the University of Ulster, Belfast</p> <p>Presented by Aralt Mac Giolla Chainnigh Royal Military College of Canada</p>	<p>Policy and Governance in the Context of the Promotion and Protection of the Irish Language in Northern Ireland</p> <p>The paper examines the current governance context in respect of the Irish language in Northern Ireland in the light of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) and the St Andrew's Agreement (2006). Both these Agreements were concerned with the establishment/re-establishment of the devolved institutions as part of conflict resolution measures aimed at improved democracy and good governance. Both Agreements contained significant references to the Irish language.</p> <p>The researcher briefly examines the changes in the policy and governance context in respect of the protection and promotion of the Irish language since the 1990s, before focusing on the conduct of the government-led public consultation on proposed Irish language legislation which took place between December 2006 and June 2007, following commitments made in the St Andrew's Agreement. The researcher examines responses to the consultation and outlines the process leading to the shifting of responsibility from the British government at Westminster to the local devolved Assembly where there is strong political opposition to protections for Irish.</p> <p>The findings of the paper show that the issue of legislation for the Irish language was used as a bargaining tool in political negotiations, with the subsequent disempowerment of the Irish speaking community and the devaluing of public consultation procedures. The Irish speaking community in the north now faces an additional challenge, to rise above the latest negation of good governance and democracy in a society emerging from conflict and to advance the protection of the Irish language in a devolved institution where the majority party has repeatedly stated its opposition to the language.</p>
<p>Cynog Prys Bangor University, Wales</p>	<p>Professionalizing Language Planning in Wales</p> <p>Following recent political developments in Wales, with a new coalition agreement between the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru: One Wales, Welsh language issues have moved to the forefront of the political agenda. At the same time, developments in Welsh-medium teaching at a higher level (university level) in Wales have also placed the spotlight on new provisions not only for Welsh-medium education but also on allied disciplines such as the translation industry, and corpus planning.</p> <p>This paper will concentrate on developments in one aspect of corpus planning, namely language planning. In the wake of new statutory bilingual policies in the public sector, many organisations have appointed dedicated language officers to service this need. Until recently, there were no professional courses for such officers, and often the role of translators and language officers were combined.</p> <p>However, there is growing demand not only for dedicated language officers, but also for university courses and modules, both at undergraduate and postgraduate (masters) level. The speaker is currently engaged in developing a new module in language planning at Bangor University, and this paper will concentrate on considerations for creating such a module to meet the needs of this emerging profession in Wales.</p>

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<p>Kevin J. Rottet Indiana University</p>	<p>Rheolwr, rheolwraig, rheolydd? Reflections on the feminization of occupational nouns in the Welsh press</p> <p>In this paper I will examine the behavior of occupational nouns (nouns denoting names of professions or trades) in a contemporary sample of Welsh-language journalism in terms of whether or not female jobholders are designated with an overtly feminized label. The journalistic corpus used in this study involves a sampling of issues of two weekly Welsh-language publications, the newspaper Y Cymro and the news magazine Golwg, drawn from the period 2001-2008. It is apparent in the corpus that references to professional women are highly variable in contemporary Welsh and this raises questions for the classroom. One of the main trends to emerge from this sample corpus is an increasing preference for epicene occupational nouns in -ydd such as cyfieithydd 'translator', cydlynnydd 'coordinator', trefnydd 'organizer', which are grammatically masculine but which can refer to a person of either sex. Reasons why this preference for epicenes should emerge in Welsh are also considered.</p>
<p>Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew University of Pennsylvania</p>	<p>Spelling and Numerical Reforms in Irish: A Centennial and a Quinquagenary View</p> <p>Approximately 100 years ago, a major Irish literary figure and cleric proposed the decimalization of the Irish number system and a little over 50 years ago, the Irish spelling system was 'critically examined,' by "Sceilg," the pen name of a scholar of Irish history and legend. Both movements generated various pamphlets and commentary, now largely forgotten, although we live and work with the results of these efforts. Who were these pioneers working for an increasingly practical approach to teaching and using Irish, and how effective were their proposals? This paper will examine the legacy of these language reformers and compare them with the situation today, when further changes are happening in the language. The modern scenario may derive either from deliberate changes in school curricula and textbooks or may be evolving in a less self-conscious and even more elusive way, based on factors such as the euro itself and the increasing globalization of the Irish language movement.</p>
<p>Donald Jones Marcus Philadelphia, PA</p>	<p>Teaching Welsh in an Adult Night School in Suburban Philadelphia.</p> <p>An experience in teaching Welsh in the above setting will be discussed, including the method of forming the class and the composition of its members. The goals of the instruction, their modification in light of the needs of the class, and the methods used to achieve the goals will be presented. I will also highlight difficulties working with this non-traditional student population.</p>
<p>Jeanne Jones Jindra Director, The Madog Center for Welsh Studies, University of Rio Grande</p>	<p>The history and mission of the Madog Center for Welsh Studies</p> <p>In this talk I will outline the history of the accidental Welsh settlement in southern Ohio and cover interesting details of other Welsh immigrants leading up to the formation of the Madog Center for Welsh Studies at the University of Rio Grande. I will give an overview of our programs, activities and events.</p>

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<p>Delyth Prys Bangor University, Wales</p>	<p>The Welsh language and Welsh emigration to the eastern United States in the first half of the nineteenth century</p> <p>The first wave of large-scale emigration from Wales to the 'land of milk and honey' as America was often called in Wales, was motivated by religious reasons. This was the migration of Welsh Quakers to Philadelphia in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. During the later part of the eighteenth century the motivation gradually changed to one of economic reasons.</p> <p>Whatever the reasons cited for wanting, or needing to emigrate, Welsh emigrants often agonised about their language and nationhood in moving to their new country. Should they try and preserve the Welsh language when they moved, should they try and establish new communities there that were Welsh in both speech and in sentiment, or should they let go of their Welshness and try and merge into the new American nation?</p> <p>This was the subject of vibrant discussion in the Welsh language press at home, and, increasingly as Welsh language periodicals started to multiply in America, in the Welsh press in the US as well. This paper will present some of these debates, with special reference to early Welsh strongholds in the Eastern United States, from the writings of Morgan Rhys to the writings of Samuel Roberts and his brothers.</p>
<p>Steve Maas University of Illinois doctoral candidate</p>	<p>To boddi or not to boddi: Treatment of the Welsh language as emblem to preserve cultural vitality and distinctiveness.</p> <p>This presentation is a discussion of some attitudes about language found in north Wales and the social forces that maintain a cultural environment in which questions of language choice are politicized. I offer some preliminary results of my PhD research, which focuses on the views of teachers in the north-west of Wales, many of whom feel that primary use of the Welsh language is a necessary part of being Welsh. In the so-called Welsh heartlands, teachers call the immersion of children in the Welsh language, "drowning" (boddi). On the north-eastern margins of that region, many teachers feel the harshness of the term "boddi" violates standards of civility and prefer "trochi" (to dip). A major portion of my field research involved cultural psychology measurements of such attitudes about language practices, as well as about everyday life in Wales and national governance. Using correspondence analysis, most famously demonstrated in Bourdieu's analysis of class-oriented tastes in Distinction, I compare the variation in attitudes of teachers to that found among self-proclaimed nationalists. I then try to describe the social and cultural context(s) for those attitudes as reflected in the discursive processes of construction of language and national identity in scholarly and more prosaic settings.</p>

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<p>Antain Mac Lochlainn</p>	<p>Using 'Speaking Irish / An Ghaeilge Bheo' – possibilities for teachers and learners</p> <p>This paper will focus on how teachers can best use this resource with intermediate and advanced learners of Irish. Excerpts from the DVD and the accompanying teaching materials will be used to demonstrate to teachers how to adapt their pedagogical practices so as to help their students become more reflective and autonomous in their learning of Irish. The notion of learner autonomy will be explored, especially in relation to language awareness.</p>
<p>Sherry DiBari M.A. student, Ohio University</p>	<p>What is the significance of the Jackson, Ohio Eisteddfod?</p> <p>The "Great Welsh Tide" of 1830-1840 brought over 3,000 immigrants into Southeastern Ohio, an area so populated with Welsh families from one particular region, that it was known as "Little Cardiganshire."</p> <p>With these settlers came the tradition of the Eisteddfod, a Welsh song and literary competition dating back nearly 1,000 years. Their first official Eisteddfod was held in Jackson County, Ohio in 1875 and featured competitions in chorus, literary composition, penmanship and Welsh translation. The tradition continued intermittently until 1922 when the Southern Ohio Eisteddfod Association was formed by a group of local Welsh businessmen. This association started the annual event, often called a "songfest," which would attract thousands of competitors to Jackson every year until 1941 when World War II brought all entertainment activities to a halt.</p> <p>In 1924, efforts were made in Jackson to create a school-wide annual Eisteddfod to accompany and precede the adult Eisteddfod. It continues to this day and is currently in its 83rd consecutive year. It is the only surviving school Eisteddfod in the United States.</p>

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<p>Gearóid Ó Néill Ollscoil Luimnigh/University of Limerick</p>	<p>Your Own Guide to Pronunciation</p> <p>Up to the relatively recent past, the only way to get some idea of the pronunciation of a language when there was no one around who spoke the language was a written representation, such as the IPA symbols. Although the sounds of many languages are becoming more readily available through some recorded medium or online facility, written representations are still used.</p> <p>For many teachers and learners the IPA symbols are not to their liking and so there are many 'home grown' pronunciation guides.</p> <p>Software has been developed to generate broad transcriptions of the pronunciation of Irish words and Manx words, in a variant of IPA. (A common approach in Irish.)</p> <p>In this paper is described a mechanism for associating one's own pronunciation guide to the IPA system. The system can be used in either direction. It can be used to return the pronunciation guide for a word entered or can return words corresponding to a particular set of sounds.</p> <p>Below are some examples of representation of pronunciation. The third example is more of a 'pragmatic' adaptation of IPA, to meet the exigencies of the moment.</p> <p>Examples of Pronunciation guides.</p> <p>cuid cud' a share, a part, a division, food (An Seabhac)</p> <p>cooid koodj goods, merchandise (Stowell)</p> <p>Ábhar spreagúil a:vr spraegu:l</p> <p>Doc</p> <p>liostanna_riomhphoiste@eml.cc<mailto:liostanna_riomhphoiste@eml.cc> 07/03/08 15:53</p> <p>Gaeilge-B@listserv.heal.net<mailto:Gaeilge-B@listserv.heal.net></p> <p>Bun-Choirse Gaelgagh – Basic Manx Course, Brian Stowell, Manx Radio Productions, 1996.</p> <p>Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla, An Seabhac, The Talbot Press, Dublin, 1967</p>