

year has directed a major videotaping project of these speakers. The StFX Celtic Studies Department will be hosting the annual conference of the North American Association of Celtic Language Teachers on May 30-31, 1997.

During the year the department sponsors a number of extra-curricular activities including Gaelic Language days, milling frolics, lectures, and film series. The department also works in conjunction with Comunn Ceilteach StFX, an active student Celtic society which sponsors ceilidhs and other cultural events. In 1995 the Celtic Department established a scholarship to send a StFX student to Scotland each summer to study Gaelic.

Suggested Reading:

- Cameron, J.D. 1996. *A Living Culture: Celtic studies and history at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Celtic Heritage, 10 (2), 20ff.*
- Dunn, C. 1953. *Highland Settler*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

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Review

COMHAR NA MÚINTEOIRÍ GAEILGE: *Who Said That?*
Dublin: CMG, 1994.

US\$25, p+p inc. NTSC (North American) version available.

Available from
Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge,
7 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Who Said That? is a two-hour video Irish course produced by Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge and Oideas Gael. The lessons are based on a "drama" centering on a "West of Ireland" family of five who hire a young Dublin woman as an au pair. The au pair and the family's teenage daughter win a trip to the Aran Islands in a radio-show contest. Romantic complications only temporarily threaten the teenagers' vacation on Inis Mór.

The very middle-class family are shown at a variety of everyday occupations, which are designed to teach basic conversational Irish. The targeted learners are apparently Irish teenagers, perhaps those preparing to attend a summer school. No information about the purpose or use of this course was supplied with the video, except for the table of contents (a book and audiocassettes are mentioned briefly during the introduction).

Listening comprehension and a functional approach to language learning are stressed; grammar is explained as the need arises. Key phrases and some grammatical inflections are illustrated by subtitles. The actors speak standardized Irish with Connemara accents, at normal conversational speed. Introductory material and translations are handled by a teacher/facilitator, who speaks more slowly with a Munster accent.

The drama is divided into three sections. "Learning segments" precede each section of the drama in Cuid 1 and Cuid 2. In Cuid 3 the procedure is reversed, and then followed by the entire drama, uninterrupted, for the final

half-hour. There is a general similarity of approach between *Who Said That?* and the audiocassette series, *Cogar!*

Cuid 1 was shown recently to an intermediate Irish class of five adults who had been working with the book *Learning Irish*. The students were asked to watch the film and give their opinions; it was explained that the film was meant for beginners and that it was probably meant to be shown over several weeks rather than in a single half-hour.

No one raised any objection to the conversation topics covered by the video; all agreed they would be useful. Several people disliked one or two of the characters, particularly the mother. Some grew weary of the teacher/facilitator; others thought her Irish was easier to understand than the actors'.

The major criticism was directed at the structure of the lessons. All of the students felt they would have liked to see more than brief snippets of the drama at the outset, so that they could try to get the drift of what was going on. This might lessen confusion and the feeling that the video jumped from topic to topic too quickly.

The students especially liked seeing the dialog or vocabulary in subtitles while watching the drama. Some of the most effective moments of *Who Said That?* came when grocery items, or hours of the clock, were shown pictorially, in subtitles and on the audio-track, reinforcing learning three ways. Admittedly, this effect is harder to produce with more abstract material, but a post office scene, where one had a clear idea what was going on, was also effective.

It was impossible not to notice the very relaxed, yet attentive state of the class while the video was screened and this change remained in effect for some time afterwards. Interestingly, although not directed to take notes, everyone in the class did. The two students with the best listening skills questioned the instructor about what they thought was said during some brief untranslated bits of dialog, for instance, during a scene when the au pair is interviewed by a very fast-talking Raidió na Gaeltachta

broadcaster. No one objected to these untranslated moments and everyone expressed enjoyment at hearing Irish spoken fluently and naturally.

An Irish teacher in North America typically faces a roomful of adults, not teenagers. Few learning materials are designed for the particular needs of this group and we must make do with whatever comes our way. Adults, who like order and structure, and who are more self-conscious than younger learners, often find that a functional approach does not cater to their need for intellectual understanding -- often expressed as a desire to "know what we are actually saying." Many here join classes because they like languages and enjoy comparative vocabulary and grammar; others hope to gain insight into the culture of their ancestors. Few start out with any desire to become active speakers of Irish.

Intellectual reasons are perfectly legitimate ones to want to learn any language. Few in this country actually "need" to communicate by means of Irish. Teachers who want to expand on a student's initial point of view often face a long uphill struggle. If seeing "real" people use Irish in everyday situations can help make this struggle a little less steep; if the familiar and comforting medium of television can help work-weary adults focus on infinitesimal points of grammar after a long day then *Who Said That?* works. It is not the video we all are hoping for, but given the near-total absence of video material in Irish, it might be interesting supplemental material for those lucky enough to have video equipment available for classroom use.

(Received April 1996)

Reviewed by Laura J. Guardi
Scoil Uí Lócháin

Materials Received

- Ó Dónaill, E. & S. Ní Mhaonaigh. (1996). *Abair Leat! Cúrsa ranga do mhúinteoirí Gaeilge: Leibhéal 1, Cuid 1*. Belfast: Iontaobhas ULTACH [in cooperation with Údarás na Gaeltachta (Letterkenny)].
- Ó Maolalaigh, R. (1996). *Scottish Gaelic in Three Months*. No place: Hugo's Language Books Ltd. [with Iain MacAonghuis as consultant].
- Ó Murchú, H. (no date). *Cogar: the course (2)*. Dublin: RTÉ [with David Little as consultant], 16 pages.
- Ó Murchú, H. (no date). *Cogar: the course (3)*. Dublin: RTÉ [with David Little as consultant], 48 pages.

The Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTL) Project at the University of Minnesota sponsors CELTIC-T, a listserv for teachers of Celtic languages. You can subscribe by sending a message to:

listserv@tc.umn.edu

the message to send:

sub celtic-t <yourfirstname> <yourlastname>

Also visit the LCTL project's World-Wide Web site:

<http://carla.acad.umn.edu/LCTL/LCTL.HTML>

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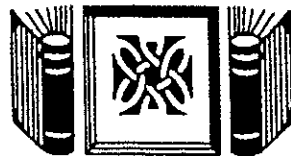
Announcements

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

- **MLA'96:** Modern Language Association. 27-30 December 1996, Washington, DC. E-mail <<deddington@mtsu.edu>>.
- **Harvard Centenary Lectures:** Celtic Linguistics. Professor Calvert Watkins, Harvard University. Respondent: Dr. Kim McCone, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. 13 February 1997, Cambridge, MA.
- **AAAL'97:** American Association for Applied Linguistics. 8-11 March 1997. Orlando, FL. See <<<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~aaal97>>>.
- **NAACL'T'97:** Third Annual Celtic Language Learning Conference. 30-31 May 1997, St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada. Proposals for papers should be sent to Dr. Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew, NAACL'T'97, Penn Language Center, 401 Lauder-Fischer Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6330, United States of America or via e-mail to rblyn@sas.upenn.edu. Deadline for proposals is 20 December 1996.
- **LACUS'97:** Linguistic Association of Canada & the United States. 29 July - 2 August 1997, York University, Toronto, ON. Abstract deadline: 15 January 1997. Contact Ruth Brend, 3363 Burbank Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.
- **ACTFL'97:** 31st Annual Meeting and Exposition. 21-23 November 1997, Opryland, Nashville, Tennessee, United States. Proposals must be postmarked 6 December 1996. Write to ACTFL, 6 Executive Plaza, Yonkers, NY 10701-6801 for membership and conference proposal form information.

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