

Reviews

Bruce Griffiths & Dafydd Glyn Jones, *The Welsh Academy English-Welsh Dictionary*, U. of Wales P., Cardiff, 1995.

US\$85.00

This new volume by Bruce Griffiths (editor) and Dafydd Glyn Jones (associate editor) is a very substantial book, which becomes the standard English-Welsh dictionary for serious purposes. Initiated by the Welsh Academy in 1974, the project has taken over twenty years to come to fruition; the result is obviously the product of an enormous amount of detailed and meticulous work by the two editors and their assistants. The Preface, in Welsh and English, by J.E. Caerwyn Williams, President of the Academy, deplors the pressure Welsh is under to borrow more and more words from English, and explains that the dictionary is designed to make native speakers as well as learners of Welsh aware of "the immense resources of the language." As the editors note, "this is a translating, not in principle a defining dictionary" (p.x). As such, it complements *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, the standard historical dictionary (still in progress).

The format is based on the first half of Harrap's *Shorter English and French Dictionary*, using British spellings of English words, and following *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* for the spelling of Welsh. The section on "The Morphology of the Welsh Language" (pp. xx-lxxix) is very informative, but rather daunting, and perhaps not set up in the most accessible way: for example the itemization and description of verb-nouns, classified by endings (pp. lvii-lxiv). The list of words causing mutation is handier (pp. xxxiii-xli). Curiously, the discussion of Welsh phonology (pp. xx-xli), beginning with the pronunciation guide, is included under "morphology." The editors' concern to minimize dialectal differences is not entirely persuasive. Although they assert that these differences involve "only a tiny proportion of the vocabulary" (p. x), the entries are full of

alternatives prefixed F (familiar), Lit (literary), N (northern), S (southern), etc.

The scope of the dictionary's entries, both headwords and glosses is very comprehensive, including conversational, literary, and some technical words. The editors emphasize that "every attempt has been made to include colloquial words and expressions, in both English and Welsh" (p. x). Entries are well supplied with familiar phrases, rendered freely and idiomatically, with a wealth of synonyms and variants. For example, under *no*, five alternatives are offered for *he's no end of a fool*: "mae'n un gwirion ofnadwy; mae'n dwpsyn na bu ei fath; fu neb erioed gwirionach; mae'n ffwl o'r radd flaenaf; mae'n andros o ben dafad." Because illustrations of this type, extending to phrases or whole sentences, are hard to alphabetize and classify, readers need patience to comb through the longer entries.

In general, the dictionary is aimed at a sophisticated user, but there are some minor inconsistencies. The Select Bibliography, conveniently brief and annotated, seems to be directed at the reader concerned with elementary language acquisition. However, the beginner who needs to find a word quickly will be more likely to consult a smaller book. Such a person might also find the "Morphology" intimidating. Perhaps, too, the dictionary could have been shorter. The introductory material is very detailed, and fewer examples of particular usages might have been given -- both here and in the dictionary entries. Although the volume is modeled on Harrap's *Shorter*, an examination of the 1987 edition of that work shows it is considerably more economical. Also, the "How to use the dictionary" section is encapsulated in two pages on the endpapers, with tabular form and highlighting, making it much more convenient. The corresponding section in the *Welsh Academy Dictionary* is absolutely essential for any first-time user -- and for reference at all times -- but it is more discursive, and needs to be read with care.

There is, then, some uncertainty about the dictionary's level, and the clarity of its formatting and organization could be improved. Like any major work of reference, it should not be consulted in a hurry. Because it strives to illustrate the variety of the Welsh language, it is not as concise as other comparable dictionaries. But these are incidental defects. This is an impressive book, from which all those interested in the Welsh language will benefit. Instructors and advanced students will find it indispensable.

(Received March 1997)

Reviewed by Anne L. Klinck
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Éamonn Ó Dónaill & Siuán Ní Mhaonaigh, *Abair Leat: Cúrsa Ranga do Mhúinteoirí Gaeilge* [Leibhéal 1, Cuid 1], Iontaobhas Ultach, Belfast, 1996.

Available from Irish Books and Media, Inc., 1433 Franklin Ave.
East, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404-2135, Tel 612 871-3505
Fax 871-3358: US\$29.95 plus postage (\$3.50 for 1 book, \$0.50
for each additional copy.

I elected to test this new text with a group of 10 beginning and slightly advanced learners, and class response was universally positive, even allowing for my decision to adapt the text for *lárchanúint* (standard Irish), an adaptation that was easy and caused little difficulty bar an extra five minutes of class-time asking the students to replace certain words and phrases in their handouts. The authors' choice of dialect seems unfortunate, as it may alienate potential teachers who grew up with the *lárchanúint* at school, but the decision was probably unavoidable, given the project's financial backers (Iontaobhas Ultach and Údarás na Gaeltachta). Nevertheless, this should not

dissuade teachers who prefer other dialects, as the text is never extreme in its use of idiom and dialect substitution is easy. *Abair Leat* is a pedagogical revolution for the Irish language, devolving much classroom power to the students and firmly delineating the teacher's role. The two greatest traps for beginning teachers of Irish are the tendency to lecture and the tendency to put shy students on the spot in front of adult peers. The text does away with both of these problems by clearly limiting the teacher's role and by creating one-on-one conversational situations where students feel they are not being watched or judged.

The text is laid out in a series of 10 units, each unit intended for a 2-hour weekly class. Teachers should allow a preparation time of 1-2 hours for each unit, preferably some time before the class itself, as prerequisites for class often include magazine clippings and other props that require gathering, and there are always portions of the text to be photocopied, stapled, and cut up.

This brings me to a very attractive aspect of the course - the fact that the students need not buy a text, as their "text" consists of handouts photocopied from the book (permission to copy the text for classroom use is granted, naturally). If the intending teacher wishes to offer the course for free, however, she should be aware of the need to assess a copying fee, as over the course of ten lessons, the number of copies becomes quite large (about 50 per student).

The ten units are very similar in structure, and each deals with a different aspect of everyday life, from Meeting People and Talking About Your Area in the first and second units, to subjects richer in vocabulary like The House, Directions, and Holidays in units 9 and 10. A typical unit will begin with an outline for the teacher of the unit's phrasal, grammatical and phonetic aims, as well as necessary vocabulary and physical materials. The teacher is then walked through the lesson: the aims are written on the blackboard and a revision section covers the previous week's work through games and vocabulary echoing. Much

of the class substance is covered by tape-recorded segments for group echoing (useful for less fluent or nervous teachers), but these segments can be replaced by "live" diction if the teacher wishes. Replacement of tape-recordings by the teacher's own voice is also possible in the following listening comprehension section too, as the book provides transcripts of all taped material. Students are then given pictorial flashcards which offer them hints as to how to answer the teacher's questions (for example, a student is given a picture of a soccer player and asked what she does in her spare time). This obviates teacher frustration with students wishing to declare in Irish pastimes like Gerbil racing and paragliding. A coffee-break ensues, and the second half of the lesson is given over to one-on-one or small-group activity, where the students are given photocopied activity sheets typically telling them to elicit and gather information from other class members using the questions and answers learned before the break. This activity may frighten the first-time teacher, as students are expected to walk around and chat among themselves, but the test group found this the most enjoyable and rewarding portion of the class, as they got to practice their Irish on other learners in an unpressured situation where mistakes were acceptable and communication was most important. The teacher herself should not be afraid to take a sheet and participate, but should remember to listen carefully for mistakes being made around her, which can then be corrected anonymously in the ensuing revision section, where the unit is revised with the aid of a take-home handout covering that day's material.

Non-Irish teachers should be sure to read the lessons thoroughly beforehand so as to avoid potential confusion stemming from the book's Irish provenance. Students, for instance, are expected to know that Spar is a supermarket chain, that the T.S.B. is a bank, and that Teach Joe is a bar, facts that were not obvious to my American class.

The manner in which the text instructs students is a great boon for teachers in less homogeneous societies where diversity of background is normal, as students never have to divulge personal information; in all conversational situations they play roles and offer fictional answers to questions.

The potential teacher's attention is also drawn to the introduction and appendices which offer sometimes startlingly intelligent advice about teaching Irish to adults, advice that has clearly been culled from many years of experience teaching in these situations.

This is not a university text, offering no more grammar than what is absolutely necessary to understand the week's activities, and completely eschewing literature and linguistic analysis. Its goal is clearly to get beginning adults speaking Irish as early as possible in normal everyday situations, and to this end, I would recommend a social coffee hour to practice the language starting perhaps at the course's sixth week. Being in a ten-week format, this course is perfect for a semester-long adult education program in a continuing education department, and to my mind out-competes similar courses like *Buntús Cainte* and *Teach Yourself Irish* for sheer simplicity and ease of use. I recommend this excellent text to any potential teacher of Irish at adult level.

(Received May 1997)

Reviewed by Brian Ó Broin
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Roibeart Ó Maolalaigh [with Iain MacAonghuis (consultant)],
Scottish Gaelic in Three Months, Hugo Language Books,
 Ltd., Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1996.

*Distributed in America by Hunter Publishing, P.O. Box 7816,
 Edison, NJ 08818. Phone 1-800-255-0343.
 US\$8.95 and US\$29.95 + US\$3.00 – Shipping.*

Most Scottish Gaelic instruction courses fall into one of two categories - either grammar based or conversation based. Almost all the older courses were grammar based, often trying to mimic the structure of Latin grammars. The recent trend, however, has been toward conversation based courses like the new *Teach Yourself Gaelic* by Robertson and Taylor or the *Speaking Our Language* series by Cànan. For this reason it is most interesting to find a new Gaelic text which is grammar based. The latest in the Hugo series of language books, *Scottish Gaelic in Three Months* by Roibeart Ó Maolalaigh is the newest entry into the ranks of Gaelic texts. And that is precisely what *Gaelic in Three Months* is - a text. Ó Maolalaigh is an instructor in the Celtic department at the University of Edinburgh, where the instruction has traditionally been grammar based.

Ó Maolalaigh is eminently qualified to write a text of this sort. He has a firm background in Irish as well as Scottish Gaelic and has a vast understanding of the connections between the two languages. His extensive knowledge of Irish also affords him an excellent grasp of the origins of Scottish Gaelic vocabulary and grammar. Ó Maolalaigh is ably assisted by his consultant, John MacInnis from the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University. MacInnis is one of the foremost Gaelic scholars alive today.

The new Hugo book reminds one somewhat of the previous grammar by Roderick MacKinnon - the first *Teach Yourself Gaelic* text. This is quite a compliment, since this author believes that the MacKinnon text is one of the best Gaelic grammars ever written. The Ó Maolalaigh book is more comprehensive than the old MacKinnon text and also

includes much more conversation. He incorporates many dialectical variations and much colloquial Gaelic, which MacKinnon ignored for the most part. One of the greatest improvements over earlier Gaelic grammars is the inclusion of two audiocassette tapes which may be purchased along with the text. Although the cassettes are not comprehensive, selected extracts from the lessons are offered to assist in the learning of pronunciation.

Although *Gaelic in Three Months* is a very good text, it does lack some of the niceties of earlier texts. Ó Maolalaigh does not include a glossary which would be very helpful for beginners. The index to this book is also very limited. The one and a half pages allowed for the index is just not sufficient to cover the topics in the text. The lack of a glossary and a good index may have been intentional to hold down the price of this book, since probably the best thing to recommend the Hugo text is the price. In Scotland, it can be purchased at only £4.95 pounds Sterling. The book can be purchased in America through Hunter Publishing, Inc. in New Jersey for \$8.95 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. This is quite a bargain for any book these days. Hunter is also selling a set of two audio tapes with the book for \$29.95.

Scottish Gaelic in Three Months is an excellent grammar for anyone serious about learning Gaelic. It is recommended, however, that the book be supplemented with more conversationally oriented course materials. This author is currently using the Hugo book in conjunction with *Gaidhlig Troimh Comhradh* by Catriona Parsons and the *Speaking Our Language* videotapes from Cànan for a class at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta. The combination of the Hugo grammar, the conversationally based series by Parsons, and the audiovisual input from *Speaking Our Language* appears to be much more effective than any one course on its own.

Although the Ó Maolalaigh text is an excellent learning tool for students of Gaelic, it is limited in its usefulness as a grammatical reference for advanced

learners and fluent speakers by its lack of a comprehensive index. Perhaps the second edition should include one. With an index, *Scottish Gaelic in Three Months* would probably rank as the best Scottish Gaelic grammar currently available.

(Received August 1997)

Reviewed by Jamie Macdonald
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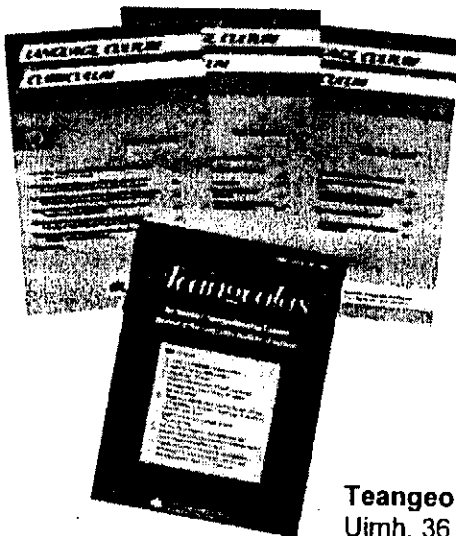
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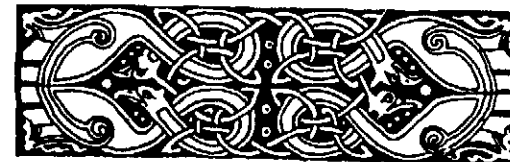
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Keynote speakers include Dr. Gearóid Denvir of University College Galway, Ireland and Dr. Kenneth Nilsen of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Invited sessions include a workshop entitled "Multimedia in the Celtic Language Classroom" to be organized by Mr. Louis Janus of the University of Minnesota and a colloquium entitled "Recent Developments in Celtic Language Software for Computer Assisted Language Learning" to be organized by Mr. Gearóid Ó Néill of the University of Limerick.

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