

## Grammar Content Comparison

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
Lenition and Eclipsis	B	C	C	N	N	N	B	N	N
Noun, Adj. Declension	A	A	A	N	A	A	N	N	N
Verb Conjugation	B	A	A	N	A	A	B	N	N
Preposition Declension	A	N	N	N	A	A	B	N	N
Country List	N	A	B	N	B	A	N	N	N
Irish County List	N	B	B	N	A	A	N	N	N
Cities and Towns	N	B	B	N	A	A	N	N	N
Language List	N	A	B	N	N	A	N	N	N
Language History	B	N	N	N	N	N	B	N	N
Cultural Content	N	N	N	N	N	N	B	N	N

## Teaching Forum

### Integrating Online Collaborative Writing into Celtic Language Teaching

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The “wiki” concept often invites skepticism among teachers who, looking to the content of the popular online Wikipedia, express doubts about the quality and sophistication of the content of that website. Yet at its core the “wiki” idea is no more than an elaborate version of online collaborative editing of publicly accessible documents, a setup that can be exploited profitably by students and teachers alike to further written skills. A “wiki” model has much to offer teachers of Celtic languages, especially in North America where classes are often conducted in less formal settings, students rely on significant outside self-study, and teaching materials may be scarce.

This year, I introduced a simple project based on this idea for the mid-level Irish language community education course that I teach in the evenings in the St. Paul area. The goal was to provide my adult learners with a forum in which they could practice their writing by posting articles in Irish centered on the theme of resources in the Twin Cities—a sort of guidebook to the city. By relying on a “wiki” format, I could correct students’ postings online, students could read the corrections and edit their own postings, and their colleagues could look back through the history of edits to learn from their own and others’ mistakes and successes. Given the part-time nature of Irish study for my students, this project also had the virtue of enabling them to post on their own schedule: writing could be uploaded whenever time permitted, and as the administrator, I could correct and comment on articles in a similarly flexible fashion. The site thus serves as a

continuously updated class “blog” in Irish that keeps class members informed of local events, artistic happenings, and other sites of interest, all while building students’ confidence in writing.

Because of the usefulness of collaborative editing in the business world, there are a number of websites that provide a host for wiki projects. For our project, we were also interested in privacy and security—as relative beginners, students preferred to keep this a class-only scheme—as well as reliability, compatibility with Irish-language orthographic conventions, and simplicity of use. In the end, the project was created on Clearwiki, a site that hosts up to ten users and unlimited page space virtually for free (cost being paid by accepting advertising), has password protection, and, so far, has been easy to use and reliable. *Moodle.org*, another popular online teaching-support site, has similar capabilities. Students have responded positively to the project, and I’ve noted increased confidence in their writing.

Although this project has largely functioned as an all-class online journal or blog, it is obvious that this format could be easily adapted to other uses in the classroom. Indeed, perhaps its greatest virtue is that it enables student-teacher interaction to take place without proximity—a significant asset for less-commonly taught language instruction which may include a lot of online or email instruction. A collaborative writing project in which students collectively write a single piece, or even the ability to post class materials online without technology expenses might certainly provide further possibilities for a “wiki”-based course.

## Ciancheardlann: A Writing Workshop At A Distance

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In recent presentations at NAACLT conferences I have reported on a set of 8-month long classes (September–April) teaching writing in Irish via email.

The most recent approach, “*Ó Lámbacán go Siúl go Rith*”, a composite report on which has been published in JCLL, (volume 10, page 26) was based on initially permitting only the simplest of sentences, which were then allowed, month by month, to increase in complexity. This was coupled with intensive drilling of grammar and syntax.

Recognizing that a certain jadedness had infected the students, beginning in April 2005 a different approach was tried, one that attempted to mimic, via email, the Writing-in-Irish workshops that are so popular in Ireland. I should note, in passing, that I have never attended one of these workshops, something I intend to correct when the opportunity presents itself. Advice was solicited from Pádraig Mac Fhearghusa, the editor of the literary review *Feasta*, and one of the conveners of a very successful series of workshops. His advice was invaluable, although he himself doubted the transferability of his experience to an email-based system.

Briefly he offered the following advice:

- ◆ Class members are there to help each other.
- ◆ Fault can be found but must be expressed in a positive manner.

“I didn’t like..., can you explain?”

“I couldn’t understand why...”

“I was puzzled by the abrupt change in direction.”

- ◆ Criticism need not be accepted but should cause the