JOURNAL OF CELTIC LANGUAGE LEARNING

JOURNAL OF CELTIC LANGUAGE LEARNING is an international review for researchers and teachers of modern Celtic languages. The official publication of the North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers, JCLL includes papers presented at the association's annual conference in addition to manuscripts submitted by Celtic language scholars worldwide. It is also a forum in which Celtic language teachers can share insights into methodology with their peers.

JCLL's mission, similar to that of NAACLT, is to provide another forum in which teachers and applied linguists can contribute to the literature presently available on second language acquisition as well as increase communication among Celtic language teachers and researchers.

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- All articles submitted will be refereed blindly by two anonymous readers. Therefore all indications of authorship should be removed from the manuscript.
- Comments from the referees will be forwarded to the authors together with the editors' decision regarding publishing before publication date.

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In Defense of Decoding

Nancy Stenson and Tina Hickey, University College Dublin

0. Introduction[1]

Literacy instruction in primary schools in Ireland has fallen on hard times of late. Although the 1999 Revised Curriculum for Irish (Government of Ireland, 1999) specifically states that the recommended communicative approach encompasses all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), it is often interpreted as emphasizing oral at the expense of written language. Perhaps as a result, research of the last decade shows that pupils' Irish reading ability is suffering. While research on reading in Irish has been fairly limited, it shows uniformly disappointing results. A study conducted by the Department of Education and Science in 2008 found that "in approximately one third of classes, pupils had significant gaps in their skills of word recognition and reading comprehension" (DES 2008:60). More recently,

Gileece et al. (2012) found attitudes toward reading in Irish declining among older children, even in Irish immersion and Gaeltacht schools, where skills are presumably higher than in the schools under consideration here. Finally, the latest evaluation of Irish schools (DES 2013) found Irish lessons to be unsatisfactory in 20% of classrooms inspected, and 24% of student outcomes were unsatisfactory, well above the percentages for English and mathematics. Thus, there are grounds for concern, confirmed by reports from Irish teachers and scholars to be discussed below.

1. Irish teaching in primary schools

Irish is taught at all grades throughout the Republic, in three distinct types of school. Gaeltacht schools are based in officially designated Irish-speaking communities and teach through Irish or bilingually. Irish is also the medium of instruction for all subjects except English in *Gaelscoileanna*, Irish immersion schools where English is the home language for most pupils. Ninety-five percent of Irish schools, however, teach through English, with Irish as a required subject in all classrooms. Only this third type of school is considered here.

Despite evidence (Hickey and Stenson 2011) that Irish orthography presents particular challenges to L2 learners in the early stages of language study, a surprising consensus has emerged in the teaching community in Ireland that Irish spelling is more regular and easier than English spelling. Accordingly, materials for the Irish primary curriculum offer little explicit instruction in the rules underlying orthographic conventions and assume ready transfer of English literacy skills. Little attention is given, moreover, to preparing teachers specifically for Irish literacy instruction, as will be seen below.

This paper argues for more explicit teaching of decoding skills in the early stages of Irish reading instruction and more support for such an approach.

We begin by describing two studies, and data from them will be presented throughout the paper as background and support for our arguments; these are based on several threads, including international reading research on both L1 and L2, the role of L1 transfer in second language acquisition (SLA), and a preliminary analysis of Irish spelling regularities.

2. Interview data from teachers and specialists

It was decided that a qualitative research design would be most appropriate in exploring the research questions. Denzin (2009:149) noted that the Cochrane Qualitative Research Methods Group (CQRMG) adopts a "broad, but conventional definition of qualitative research, encompassing specific methods (interviews, participant and non-participant observation, focus groups, ethnographic fieldwork) data types (narrative), and forms of analysis." Two qualitative studies were conducted, consisting of semi-structured[2] interviews, one with Irish language specialists, and the second study with primary school teachers, to gather views on standard practice and common challenges in teaching Irish reading. The first study included people who work with Irish professionally in various capacities: secondary and university teachers of Irish, journalists, teacher educators and curriculum developers. Thirteen participants, 8 male and 5 female, were interviewed in Irish regarding their views on the teaching of Irish reading, the challenges of Irish spelling and related issues. Responses were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify recurring themes and subthemes in the responses.

The second study comprised interviews with primary teachers in English-medium schools, who teach Irish as one of their classroom subjects.

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2 Mason (2003) notes that semi-structured interviews are the type of interviews most frequently found in qualitatitive research. Their aim is to ensure comparability across participants in the issues explored but also flexibility in the sequence in which questions are asked, and in how or whether some areas might be followed up with different interviewees.

The same methodology was used, but interviews were conducted in English to avoid deterring potential participants who lacked confidence in their Irish. Teachers were asked about general priorities in the teaching of Irish, the role of reading in Irish classes, and the methods and challenges of teaching Irish and Irish literacy. Nine teachers (including one principal) were interviewed, 3 male and 6 female, with experience covering the range of primary levels. The main themes to be discussed here include the status of reading in Irish, the teaching of decoding, teachers' confidence in their own Irish skills, preparation of teachers for teaching reading, and unwarranted assumptions by fluent speakers about the spelling system. Adult learners' difficulties with reading are also briefly discussed.

2.1 The status of reading in Irish.

A significant theme emerging from both specialist and teacher interviews concerned a perception of secondary status for Irish literacy instruction in primary classrooms. Several teachers indicated a firm belief in the importance of prioritizing oral Irish, and reference to the secondary role of reading instruction.

> 1. *a. Is í an aidhm is mó atá ag an múinteoir anois ná an Ghaeilge labhartha.*
>
> The teacher's main goal now is spoken language. (M1)[3]
>
> b. My priority has always been getting them to speak it. I really don't care too much about any other aspect. (PT1)
>
> c. I don't think there's enough emphasis on teaching reading. We're getting a lot of—it's all about the phrases and the speaking Irish and them understanding Irish. (T1)

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3 Codes following quotations identify the participants by their professional roles with respect to Irish: T=primary teacher, M=secondary teacher, O=teacher educator, P=principal, S=other kinds of specialist. Some participants had more than one role, signaled by double letters.

d. …what I want for them to do - is to be able to speak Irish, to hear it spoken with different accents, to hear it spoken as a real language, and I am much more concerned about that than about teaching them reading… (T2)

Such prioritization of oral Irish is relatively recent; a sense of historical decline in attention to Irish literacy was shared by language specialists, teacher educators and teachers alike:

2. a. *Níl an bhéim chéanna ar an léitheoireacht agus a bhíodh sna bunscoileanna anois…is cúrsaí cumarsáide go léir a bhíonn acu, agus cúrsaí comhrá agus mar sin ann.*

There isn't the same emphasis now on reading as there used to be in the primary schools … it's all communication and conversation and such. (S2)

b. Ní chaithim féin mórán ama ag ullmhú múinteoirí don léitheoireacht…Níl siad ag léamh mórán, bhuel na daoine óga atá mise a mhúineadh. Ach tuigim féin an príomhthábhacht atá ag an Ghaeilge, ná an teanga labhartha.

I don't spend much time preparing teachers for reading…they [student teachers] don't read much, well, the young people that I teach. But I understand that the primary importance of Irish is the spoken language. (MO1)

c. Because what we're expected to teach now is a totally different product than—it was all written with us, when we were learning Irish, but now…we're teaching the children to speak Irish as well, but we didn't really learn to speak Irish ourselves. (T1)

d. …*bhí siad an-diúltach faoi agus [nocht siad an tuairim:] "conas go mbeadh an iomarca seo á dhéanamh sa Ghaeilge?"….mhothaigh me nach raibh an phráinn nó an tábhacht chéanna ag baint leis…*

[at a workshop for teachers]...they were very negative about it and [their attitude was:] "why do too much of this reading in Irish?"…I felt that there wasn't the same urgency or importance to it [Irish literacy]. (O4)

e. ...*dúirt mé "léitheoireacht na Gaeilge agus litriú" … agus deir sí "I don't really bother doing either; the children hate it and I'm not too mad about it myself"….Feiceann siad go bhfuil rudaí níos tábhachtaí agus nach bhfuil an phráinn chéanna, agus b'fhéidir nach dtugann muid stádas ceart don léitheoireacht…*

...I said [to a colleague that this interview would be about] "Irish reading and spelling" and … she said "I don't really bother…" … They see more important things [to do] and not the same urgency, and maybe we don't give reading the proper status… (O4)

Given these attitudes, it is imperative to compare what is actually happening in Irish language classrooms with the recommended approaches. The *Revised Curriculum and Guidelines for Teachers for Irish* (DES 1999), aimed at learners of Irish as an L2, recommend that Irish be the medium of instruction for Irish lessons and informal use of Irish throughout the school day is advised to reinforce oral communication skills, which have been the focus in the first three years of Irish instruction. While the curriculum places primary emphasis on oral skills, it explicitly mentions all four skills.[4] The guidelines also recommend using a variety of approaches in teaching reading, to build linguistic awareness, promote active learning and encourage pleasure reading in Irish.

Some adherence to this recommendation was noted in certain teachers' comments, indicating that they do try to use storybooks and other materials to encourage Irish reading for pleasure, rather than relying solely on textbooks and accompanying exercises.

3. a. I wouldn't stay with the [Irish] textbook...the text is boring for a start. (T3)

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4 "Is ar thuiscint agus ar labhairt na Gaeilge atá an phríomhbhéim sa churaclam Gaeilge, ach chun cumarsáid iomlán a dhéanamh beidh na páistí in ann a gcuid smaointe a bhreacadh síos i bhfoirm scríofa, chomh maith, agus beidh páistí eile in ann iad a léamh. (An Ghaeilge: Treoirlínte do Mhúinteoirí, p. 10) {The primary emphasis in the Irish curriculum is on understanding and speaking Irish, but for full communication, children will be able to express their thoughts in written form as well, and other children will be able to read them.]

b. I think that they learn how to fill in blanks, they learn how to read just awful...textbooks, that mean nothing and that they care less about…I would take bits of a book that was an actual story-book…rather than just do a textbook. I didn't use textbooks. (T2)

c. I'd use anything from props to puppets to IT, dependent on the topic…. I'd use a wide range. But obviously we'd have to supplement. (T5)

Despite these indications of some effort to go beyond the basic language texts, other responses suggest heavy reliance on textbooks and workbooks.

4. a. ...[designing creative activities] was taking a lot of my energy as a teacher, so gradually...I've had to space out my energies, so I have become more reliant on the books. (T1)

b. My feeling is that the poorer the teachers' standard of Irish and the less the interest they have in it, the more they're flogging textbooks. (PT1)

c. ... there was a huge resource of Irish books, and I'd ask teachers if they used them and they were going "noo"— They were using the textbook. (T6)

This supports the findings of Harris et al. (2006) and Hickey (2001), who found variety of Irish books or genres in short supply in many classrooms, with reading and writing activities from a single textbook seen as merely reinforcing or testing oral learning.

2.2 Teaching decoding in Irish.

The second salient theme to emerge from the data concerns provision of explicit decoding instruction in Irish reading, i.e., instruction on the relationship between sounds and spelling that is at the core of phonological awareness (Ehri 2007, Ehri and Wilce 1987, Ellis 1997, Perfetti 1997). The most common form of such instruction is through the various teaching programs known collectively as phonics. Although phonics materials do exist

for Irish (e.g., BELB 2011), respondents indicated that they are rarely used in English–medium schools. Such explicit instruction in Irish grapheme-phoneme relationships has been shown (Ó Faoileáin 2006, Hickey 2007) to be quite limited, and the teachers in our study confirmed these findings, indicating that while explicit decoding may be taught (typically through phonics instruction) in English reading lessons, it is rarely revisited in Irish.

> 5. a. That [decoding] is definitely a part that I neglect a bit—it is there in the curriculum, but I've had very little guidance in how to teach it… (T1)
>
> b. I don't teach spellings; I teach meanings. (T2)
>
> c. *Caithfidh mé admháil nár chuir mé aon bhéim riamh ar fhorbairt scileanna léitheoireachta sa ghnáthrang Gaeilge.*
>
> I have to admit that I never put any emphasis on developing reading skills in the ordinary Irish classroom. (MS1)

2.3 Teacher confidence and proficiency.

Part of the reason for the limited attention to Irish orthographic conventions seems to lie with teachers' low confidence in their own Irish skills in general, or their reading/writing skills in particular.

> 6. a. I think the biggest challenge is, a lot of people are worried about their own levels [of Irish], going 'I'm not good enough, I'm too nervous'… and teachers sometimes drop back into English maybe quicker than they should. (T6)
>
> b. I'm very confident speaking Irish in the class...but written Irish on the board—I'm always afraid of making mistakes and that's where I'm not comfortable. (T1)
>
> c. *…deireann siad liom…agus tá siad ag rá leo féin 'níl a fhios agam an bhfuil sin ceart.'*
>
> They [other teachers] tell me … and they tell themselves 'I don't know if that's right.' (M2)

d. Bíonn siad buartha faoin a gcuid gramadaí, bíonn siad buartha faoin a gcanúint agus an blas atá acu.... Agus litriú chomh maith, sea.

They are worried about their grammar, they're worried about their dialect and accent...And spelling as well, yes.   (M1)

Indeed, comments of the teacher educators suggest that this lack of confidence among teachers may be partly justified. In particular, they noted a tendency to neglect attention to the pronunciation of spoken Irish. This is noteworthy, since such neglect makes it hard for teachers to help learners relate spellings to pronunciations when they undertake to learn written Irish.

7. a. Mhúin mé sa Ghaeltacht, ar chúrsa samhradh sa Ghaeltacht…
agus bhí scanradh orm ar an gcaighdeán a bhí ag na múinteoirí eile.

I taught a summer course in the Gaeltacht …and the [low] standard of the other teachers shocked me. (M2)

b. Bhí mé ag glacadh leis gur léitheoirí líofa a bheadh i gceist le ábhair oidí ach, ar an drochuair, ní 'hin mar atá.

I was assuming that student teachers would be fluent readers, but unfortunately, that's not how it is. (O3)

c. Ní thuigeann siad an tábhacht atá le séimhiú agus urú—seo na daoine a bhfuil céim acu sa Ghaeilge agus atá ag ullmhú don mhúinteoireacht.

They don't understand the importance of lenition and eclipsis— this is people with a degree in Irish, preparing to teach. (MO1)

d. Tá rudaí eile, na consain caol a bhíonn deacair dóibh, na défhoghair a bhíonn deacair dóibh, b'fhéidir nár múineadh riamh do na daoine seo, níor míníodh riamh cén chaoi a ndeirtear iad sin, mar gheall ar an nGaeilge a bheith mar dhara teanga [acu]. Agus fiú amháin na consain, tús consain focal, ch, bh. Fágtar amach na séimhithe go minic, go mionmhinic.

There are other things, the slender consonants that are hard for them [student teachers],:the diphthongs that are hard for them, maybe they were never taught how these are pronounced, because

Irish is their second language. And even the consonants—initial consonants of word, ch, bh. The lenitions are often left out, very often. (O3)

e. *Go minic ní bhionn siad in ann na fuaimeanna a aithint.*

They are often unable to recognize the sounds. (SO1)

f. *Bhí agallamh ar bun againn le a lán daoine óga…dúradh liom gur múinteoirí, bunmhúinteoirí ochtó faoin gcéad acu, agus go raibh an Ghaeilge chomh dona ag 'chuile dhuine acu, nó a bhformhór, is a bheadh sí ag aon tríocha duine a bhuailfeadh muid isteach ón tsráid, rud a scanraidh mé beagán.*

We had an interview with a lot of young people…I was told that 80% of them were primary teachers and that all, or most, of them spoke Irish as badly as any 30 people we might pull in off the street, which scared me a little. (S1)

These observations were confirmed by the Chief Inspector's report (DES 2013), which cited teachers' own competence as an important factor in quality and effectiveness of Irish instruction. (DES 2013:49).

2.4 Preparation to teach Irish and Irish reading.

In fairness to teachers, it must be said that relatively little attention is given either to student teachers' language development, as indicated in (8), or to Irish-specific reading instruction techniques in pre-service teacher education, as shown in (9).

8. a. *Ó mo thaithí féin…gearradh siar ar chuid mhaith de na huaireanta a bhíodh ann chun teanga, an teanga féin a fhoghlaim*

From my own experience ... the hours [in teacher education] that there used to be for learning the language itself have been cut back a lot. (M2)

b. *Tá daoine ag teacht chugam anois, mic léinn a dteastaíonn uathu a bheith ina múinteoirí amach anseo, agus níl an tacaíocht ar fáil dóibh*

chun Gaeilge labhartha, ná chun a gcuid Gaeilge a labhairt nó a úsáid ar ard-leibhéal.

People are coming to me who want to be teachers and there is no support available to them for spoken Irish or to speak or use their Irish at a high level. (M1)

9. a. …agus ní chaithimidne mar theagascóirí go leor ama leo le iad a chumasú le tabhairt faoi sin.

…and we as instructors don't spend enough time to enable them to undertake that. (O2)

b. Caithfidh na múinteoirí tacú leis an léitheoireacht. Ach ní dhéanann siad é agus ní chaithim féin mórán ama ag ullmhú múinteoirí don léitheoireacht.

Teachers have to support reading. But they don't and I don't spend much time preparing teachers for reading. (MO1)

This was echoed by a primary teacher reflecting on her lack of preparation for the teaching of Irish reading.

10. I wish I had more training in how to teach it. (T3)

In other cases, the low level of explicit instruction in Irish reading appears to be due to lack of interest on the teacher's part (cf. 2e above), and/or a lack of appreciation of the contribution of reading to supporting oral language development.

2.5 Assumptions about Irish spelling.

Despite the crisis of confidence documented above, several teacher educators, as well as some teachers themselves, seem to assume that Irish spelling is somehow significantly easier than English.

11. a. Irish is so much simpler than English, because a sound is a sound. (T6)

b. Ar shlí amháin…is dóigh liom go bhfuil cuid mhaith den Ghaeilge b'fhéidir níos simplí…

In a way, I think that much of Irish is maybe simpler… (S3)

c. Deirtear go bhfuil litriú na Gaeilge i bhfad níos fusa ná litriú an Bhéarla.

Irish spelling is said to be much easier than English spelling. (MS1)

Additionally, when asked how well the spelling of the Caighdeán Oifigiúil [Official Standard] corresponded to their own spoken dialect, fluent speakers tended to report the spelling as reflecting their own pronunciation well (regardless of which dialect they speak). Such beliefs may be partly responsible for the lack of attention to Irish spelling and decoding skills. But as shown by studies of reading performance (Harris et al. 2006, DES 2008) and other work (Hickey 2001, Parsons and Lyddy 2009a, b), the assumption that Irish spelling is transparent and can just be picked up as vocabulary is learned seems clearly unwarranted, as will be argued further below.

2.6 Other learners of Irish.

It is not just schoolchildren for whom a lack of Irish literacy instruction poses learning problems. In the first author's experience of teaching university-level Irish in North America over many years, adult learners, already fluent readers of English, also report difficulties in understanding Irish spelling, and resultant problems in vocabulary retention. Participants in the study familiar with this population of Irish learners confirm that experience.

12. *Is cuimhneach liom Meireacánach ag rá liom…go rinne sé iarracht Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus d'éirigh sé as: 'It [spelling] makes no sense at all!' a dúirt sé liom.*

I recall an American telling me…that he tried to learn Irish and gave up: 'It [Irish spelling] makes no sense at all!' he told me. (S2)

Few if any textbooks for adults give more than cursory attention to Irish spelling patterns and teachers confronted by adult learners of Irish are as ill-prepared to deal with their needs as with those of children. Indeed, even the most fluent and experienced teachers who have not encountered this population can be entirely unaware of this particular problem until they meet adult learners with no experience of Irish orthography:

> 13. *Is dócha gurb é an chéad uair riamh domhsa, gur mhúin mé glan-tosaitheoirí ná nuair a chuaigh mé go Ceanada anuraidh, agus d'oscail sé sin mó shúile. Níor léir domh na deacrachtaí a bhí ann...."*

> The first time I ever taught absolute beginners, I guess, was when I went to Canada last year, and that opened my eyes. I wasn't aware of the difficulties... (MS2)

Our position is that the lack of attention to teaching decoding in Irish may short-circuit the development of Irish reading as an integral and beneficial part of language learning, and perhaps contribute to the disappointing results mentioned above. In the sections that follow, we discuss the results of the studies described here in light of the general research on literacy instruction and argue the need for Irish teachers to understand Irish spelling and explicitly teach decoding skills.

3. Why teach decoding?

For over 100 years now, reading education literature has been dominated by a vigorous debate, which has been popularly dubbed "the reading wars," a controversy revolving around differing views of the reading process and associated educational philosophies. Briefly, the debate centers on competing theories of the proper instructional focus in beginning (L1) literacy. These theories correspond to different views of the nature of language processing in reading. The top down view holds that understanding of meaning proceeds from the text and its context without mediation of the spoken language,

whereas the bottom up view of reading involves association of the written symbols with phonemes of the spoken language, a process known as phonological recoding, or decoding. The best-known methodological approaches associated with these different reading-world views are the Whole Word approach and Phonics. The International Reading Association's position statement holds that there is no one best method and most pay lip service to a "balanced approach" drawing on techniques from both traditions, but the debate continues and reading instruction seems to vary widely as a consequence (Adams 1994, Snow and Juel 2007). Although there is evidence that whole word recognition is part of the reading process, at least in certain situations and certainly for English speakers, a comprehensive review of reading research by the U.S. National Reading Panel (NICHD 2000) found that a preponderance of recent work now indicates that instruction in phonological awareness critically aids both reading fluency and comprehension. This research is reviewed next.

3.1 The importance of phonological awareness and decoding.

Adams (1994:58) argued that a basic level of analytic ability makes learning to read much easier, and that letter knowledge is the best predictor of later reading acquisition, perhaps because of the similarity of many letter names to the sounds they represent. Of relevance here is the fact that for children acquiring literacy in Irish as their L2, the Irish sounds represented by the same letters often differ from the sounds they represent in English, making explicit instruction in their values even more important (cf. 3.2 below). Explicit phonics instruction was early on shown to help beginning readers, for example by Chall (1967); this is supported more recently by the National Reading Panel report. Stuart and Coltheart (1988) have also found that beginning readers with phonics skills retain sight words faster because their alphabetic knowledge provides a basis for expecting certain connections between written and spoken words.

Ehri (1992, 1995, 1999, 2007) has developed an influential theory of how emergent readers learn sight words. The phases in this development can be summarized as progressing from a Pre-alphabetic phase when children have no awareness of relations between sounds and letters, to a Partial alphabetic phase, characterized by limited knowledge of letters-sound pairings but primary reliance on intial or other salient letters in words. In the Full alphabetic phase, children can match all the letters with sounds and segment words into phonemic units. Finally, in the Consolidated alphabetic phase they extract patterns of letter-groupings across different words and store them as units, enabling them to read and remember multisyllabic words by sight.

Since many of the most frequent words encountered by learners in the early stages of reading are irregular in their grapheme-phoneme correspondences, a tendency to teach them as whole or sight words has emerged. But Ehri has argued that that the whole-word route to sight word learning is less effective in developing word recognition to the level of efficiency required for fluent reading than starting from an understanding of phoneme-grapheme correspondence, "the glue that holds the words in memory for quick reading." (Ehri 2003:2). Stanovich and Stanovich (1991) likewise showed that teachers who help pupils to analyse words promote automaticity; so does frequent practice with texts containing high frequency words.

Similarly, according to Stuart, Masterson and Dixon (1999:118), it is the development of good phonological recoding skills that distinguishes better from weaker readers, who rely unduly on sight vocabulary learned as wholes.

Ellis (1997) cites several other studies that indicate an important role for phonological awareness in young children learning to read and spell. The provision of explicit training in phonological awareness over several years has been shown to have a positive effect on both reading and spelling. Reading and spelling do not develop simultaneously, but have a bootstrapping effect on each other as learners proceed through Ehri's stages.

In light of these findings, alongside the difficulties reported by teachers in developing pupil literacy in Irish without systematic use of decoding training, an a priori case can be made (see also Hickey 2007) for providing beginning readers with supports to develop the necessary phonological awareness and decoding skills specifically for the language that they are learning to read. What must be factored in here is that reading in a second language poses particular challenges, which additionally vary between languages. Murtagh's (1988:18) summary of reading research in the context of second language acquisition concludes that low levels of skill in the L2 can short-circuit the reading process and impede use of efficient strategies. This will be taken up below.

3.2   Reading in a second language.

Verhoeven (2000) showed that the smaller second-language vocabularies of L2 learners seriously impede their reading. Limited second language proficiency may 'short-circuit' (e.g. Alderson, 2013, Bernhardt & Kamil 1995) the reading process and cause even readers who are good at reading their native language to revert to less effective strategies in their second language. Limited proficiency also impedes reading processing. Droop & Verhoven (2003) note that limited exposure to the L2 may result in weaker word representations and thus to slower and less accurate reading. The decoding of second language readers is less automatic because of their restricted knowledge of the grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules and orthographic constraints of the L2, so that the lower-level decoding takes up more of the processing time. Even advanced language learners with good native language reading skills read differently in their L2 because their less automatic word recognition skills in their second language impede their ability to focus on text meaning.

There is evidence to this effect in Irish reading. Hickey (1991) found that Grade III children in mainstream schools read aloud in English, their

L1, at a rate of 115 words per minute, but in Irish at a rate of only 75 words per minute. Parsons and Lyddy (2009b) also showed that children in mainstream schools read Irish significantly more slowly and with more errors than children in Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna. This can be attributed to their poorer general proficiency in Irish, and weaker vocabulary. Reading rate is improved by practice, but it is those readers with the slowest rate who find L2 reading most stressful. The 'Matthew Effect' (Stanovich, 1986) uses the biblical analogy that 'to those that have, is given' to sum up the position of learners who do not develop automatized word recognition skills and therefore do not enjoy reading, unlike successful readers. Because they do not enjoy it they avoid it and thus are less likely to develop the skills they need to escape this vicious circle.

This directly relates to the issue of reading fluency, identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) as one of the five critical components of reading. Snow, Burns and Griffin (1998) argued that the ability to extract meaning from print depends on the development of word recognition accuracy and reading fluency. Pikulski and Chard (2005: 510) emphasize the need to strive for fluency from children's earliest experiences with print through developing effective decoding skills. Rather than viewing these decoding skills as the less interesting end of the reading process, they argue that automatic decoding skills are essential for successful reading comprehension. This automaticity is even harder to develop for second language readers, and therefore we argue that efforts to support early decoding skills will improve L2 reading fluency, along the lines argued above for L1 reading fluency.

Further arguments for decoding emerge from consideration of cross-linguistic investigations of orthography, where automatic decoding and phonological recoding have been found to play a role across a wide range of reading populations, languages, and orthographic systems.

3.3 Cross-linguistic perspectives on orthography.

Many language learners encounter an L2 writing system that appears not to diverge markedly from that of their first language. Rather than having to deal with a logographic system or new alphabet, these learners find that their first language literacy maps quite conveniently onto their second language. However, as Bernhardt (2003) notes, even where the mapping is convenient, the mere existence of a first language makes the second language reading process considerably different, because of the nature of the information stored in memory. While visual memory may match up with the input text, syntactic or phonological memory may not. Even languages using the same alphabet can differ in the transparency of their orthography.

A series of cross-linguistic studies of orthographies over the past couple decades has shown that literacy development is affected by the nature of the orthographic system that represents the language in written form. Seymour, Aro and Erskine (2003) compared children learning to read English with those learning twelve other European languages. Although all readers showed evidence of phonological processing, they found that children master reading much more quickly in languages with simple syllable structures and transparent (i.e. regular correspondences of one sound to one symbol) spelling systems than in languages like English with more complex syllable structures and orthographies. They propose that complex orthographies require more complex processing that take longer to learn. Ziegler et al (2010) confirmed this hypothesis in a study showing that reading speed varied with the orthographic consistency of the language and that, while phonological awareness is important for fluent reading in all languages studied, its strongest effect was in the more complex languages like English. Only in the most transparent orthographies, e.g., Finnish, did phonological awareness show less robust effects on reading. One interpretation of these results is that for highly transparent languages like Finnish, targeted teaching of phonological awareness

is unnecessary for rapid reading acquisition, as decoding skills develop automatically. Other studies of languages of varying transparency (Spencer and Hanley 2003, Katz and Feldman 1983, Ellis et al 2004) show that the more consistent an orthography, the more early readers use phonological decoding rather than relying on whole-word recognition.

We turn now to consideration of the position of Irish in this crosslinguistic continuum. The study reported in Hickey and Stenson (2010) looked at just this question. Examination of the most frequent 100 words in a corpus of children's literature compared with a similar study of English by Stuart et al. (2003) showed that the most frequent 100 words were indeed spelled more consistently in the Irish corpus than in the English one. Specifically, 71% of the words in the Irish corpus had regular spellings, compared to only 52% of the English words. Since Irish is indeed more consistent than English in the early reader vocabulary examined, those regularities can be helpful to beginning readers.

Nevertheless, Hickey and Stenson argued that the complexity of the Irish spelling rules is still problematic for learners, especially L2 learners, despite their greater consistency. Given the complexity of Irish spelling and the findings of Ziegler et al. (2010) showing the importance of decoding skills in reading such languages, this constitutes a further argument that beginning Irish readers would benefit from learning to decode.

There is evidence that successful older Irish readers do decode when they read: Parsons and Lyddy (2009a) studied the errors of children in English-medium, Gaeltacht, and Irish immersion schools on a variety of reading tasks, and compared their errors with those of previous research on English (Stuart and Coltheart 1988, Ehri 2007) and other languages (Wimmer and Hummer 1990, Ellis and Hooper 2001, Spencer and Hanley 2003, Hoxhallari et al. 2004). These demonstrated that children reading regular orthographies tended to make mostly non-word errors, indicating a greater use of phonological

decoding in the reading process, whereas readers of less consistent orthographies like English made more real-word errors or simply did not attempt to read unknown words, indicating a greater reliance on whole-word lexical retrieval and only partial analysis of the words. Parsons and Lyddy found that the weakest Irish readers showed the highest proportion of word substitution errors (including substitutions of English words for Irish ones), while the best readers made more non-word errors, indicating that they were using decoding strategies in their reading.

This raises the issue of the relationship between orthographic consistency and transparency or simplicity. These must be considered separately, as argued in Hickey and Stenson (2010). On this basis, we argue in the next section that the widespread assumption that what is known from English will transfer and be usable in reading Irish without explicit help is naïve at best.

3.4 Transfer in second language acquisition.

In most schools, reading is introduced in English before Irish, as recommended by the curriculum guidelines; these embody an assumption that literacy skills developed in English will transfer automatically to Irish reading:

> *De ghnáth, ní thosófar ar léitheoireacht na Gaeilge go foirmiúil roimh rang 2 i scoileanna T2. Faoin am sin, beidh bunús maith ag an bpáiste i léitheoireacht an Bhéarla agus b'fhéidir go dtarlódh méid áirithe den traschur scileanna.*

> Usually, reading in Irish is not begun before second class in T2 [English medium] schools. By that time the child will have a good basis in reading English and perhaps a certain amount of transfer of skills will take place." (Curaclam ar line/Curriculum online: p 3/9)

Comments of teachers also reflect this expectation:

14. a. In English we go by the phonics…you don't do phonics in Irish...you get to 1st class and all of a sudden…the kids are expected to just read. (T3)

b. We don't formally teach it… people just kind of assume that they're going to learn. (T2)

Unfortunately, these assumptions are often unjustified, leading to deficits at higher levels as well. One of the specialists interviewed summarized the situation, arguing that it is too often assumed at a given level of instruction that incoming learners have achieved the goals of the previous level, without checking whether or not they have in fact reached the assumed standard:

15....mar sin, tá sé cosúil le bréag mhór nach bhfuil aon duine sásta admhachtáil gur áil di agus fágann sé go bhfuil daoine anois ag dul isteach sna coláistí oiliúna, mar shampla, agus is dóigh ardteistiméaracht -- ardghrád bainte amach acu i nGaeilge, ach dháiríre gan scríobh ná go minic labhairt na Gaeilge go maith acu, ach gur éirigh leo na ceachtanna is gá a dhéanamh leis na scrúdaithe a phassáil. Agus fágann sin, nuair a théann siadsan thríd an bpróiseas, muna bhfuil córas an-mhaith sna coláistí oiliúna, agus áirím ansin na coláistí do na bunmhúinteoirí agus na hollscoileanna i gcás na meánmhúinteoirí, go bhfuil daoine ag tíocht amach ag imirt le bacaí a rinne siad féin, nó na faillí a rinne siad féin, ar an gcéad ghlúine eile, agus leanann an ciorcal sin arís ar aghaidh.

...so it's like a big lie that no one is willing to admit to, and that means that people are now going into the teachers' colleges for example, probably with a high Leaving Certificate grade in Irish, but really without being able to write or often speak Irish well, but they succeeded in the lessons they needed to pass the exams. And that means, when they go through the process, if there isn't a very good system in the colleges of education, and I include here the colleges for primary teachers and universities in the case of secondary teachers, that people are coming out visiting their own weaknesses or deficits on the next generation, and the circle continues on like that. (S1)

Ziegler and Goswami (2005) highlight the need to adjust teaching to the orthographies involved. The complexity and distinctness of the Irish spelling system call into question the assumption that ability to read in English transfers to Irish in a helpful way.

In fact, transfer in second language acquisition is a much more complex process than is often recognized. When our participants, and the curriculum guidelines, talk of transfer from English, the assumption seems to be that this will always be helpful. But SLA scholars have long known that transfer of knowledge to a second language can be either positive or negative, depending on what grammatical features the two languages share (Odlin 1989, Lado 1957, Gass and Selinker 2001). While work by Ringbom (1987) suggests a more prominent role for positive transfer than was evident in early SLA literature, the fact remains that similarities between L1 and L2 are essential before positive transfer can take place.

Transfer across writing systems is likewise acknowledged to rest on similarities and differences among orthographies, such that the greater the distance between L1 and L2, the more time needed to acquire the new writing system. Discussing L2 acquisition of English and Persian (written with the Arabic alphabet), Odlin writes:

Since the two languages share only the alphabetic principle, there is little if any positive transfer aiding the acquisition of English by Persian speakers or the acquisition of Persian by English speakers, though there is probably some advantage arising from having already learned to encode and decode written language. Odlin (1989:126)

Although Irish and English share the Roman alphabet, where their spelling conventions are concerned it is far from clear that there are enough similarities in orthographic conventions of the two languages for such reliance on positive transfer from English, as evidenced in the quotations above. While young Irish readers can be helped by what they have learned previously of left-to-right linear order of text and the alphabetic principle that they have

acquired in English reading, this is not to say that they have no more to learn when starting to read in Irish. It cannot be assumed that the letters of the Roman alphabet have the same values in Irish as in English. There are many significant differences.

First, the phonetic values of consonants in English, while similar in their primary articulatory features, cannot be treated as identical in Irish, where the same alphabetic symbols can represent phonemically distinct secondary articulations of palatalisation and velarisation (slender and broad consonants in traditional terminology). Given that beginning L2 readers lack full control of the spoken Irish phonological contrasts, explicit acknowledgement that a given symbol always represents two distinct phonemes in Irish (differentiated by combining with other letters) is critically important to call learners' attention to the phonological contrasts between the two languages. Other domains where it is unreasonable to assume that learners can work out the patterns for themselves include the conventions for signaling consonant mutations (*mh, dh, bp, nd, ts, etc.*) and the digraphs signaling single vowels (*ao, eoi, ei*, etc).

Given the enormous differences in the phonological values assigned to the same graphemes in English and Irish, more negative transfer than positive can be expected from the casual approach currently taken to Irish reading. Since learners tend to seek similarities to what they already know (Odlin 1989, Ringbom 1987) the risk of falling back on familiar conventions of their own language is high. They will look for similarities to familiar spellings. Not finding them, in words such as *gceannóidh, bhfuil,* they will stumble, and perhaps give up. Seeing spellings that are similar to known English words, they will be more likely to apply the English values if they have not been taught the patterns that underlie the Irish ones. There is evidence that this happens in Irish; the authors have observed and teachers cite cases of English pronunciations being applied in words such as *teach* (/tiːtʃ / for /t'ax/), *bean* (/ biːn/ for /b'an/), *rang* (/ræŋ/ for /raŋg/), *bóthar* (/bɔðər/ for /boːhər/), *seisear*(/ siːzər/ for /ʃeʃər/).

4. Conclusion

The teaching of Irish reading in primary schools is a significant enterprise that requires adequate support. Teachers and experts interviewed indicate that the teaching of reading in Irish is increasingly being sidelined, for a combination of reasons. A significant factor is teacher preparation, in terms not only of Irish language proficiency, but also of explicit training in how Irish orthography works, and pedagogical approaches to teaching it. While fully supporting the importance of reading beyond the textbook, promoting comprehension, and reading for pleasure with real literature, we have argued here that attention to language-specific spelling rules at the outset will enable learners better to recognize and pronounce unfamiliar words as they read, thus enhancing both vocabulary acquisition and syntactic skills in spoken Irish, as well as the will to read and use the language more. An added complication is the tension between teaching phonics and whole words which is transferred to the teaching of reading in Irish as an L2. Teacher and specialist interviews indicate a reliance on a whole-word "see-and-say" approach that dominates Irish language classrooms. Although some phonics materials are available and in use in Gaelscoileanna, most teachers and teacher educators interviewed indicate that they are rarely used to teach reading in English-medium schools.

Recent research on reading, however, has highlighted the centrality of phonological decoding, even in the most complex orthographies such as English. The more consistent the orthography, the faster the decoding skills are acquired, and reading fluency follows from that. As Irish spelling is, in fact more consistent than English, in early vocabulary at least, teaching decoding should help learners acquire the patterns of sound-spelling relations needed for fluent Irish reading, although both curriculum and teacher interviews seem unaware of the value that such instruction could have.

While it is true that previous experience in reading one's native language

can be transferred to a second language, little attention has hitherto been paid to the fact that such transfer can be either positive or negative. Given the extensive differences in spelling conventions of the two languages, transfer of English spelling rules to Irish is likely to be negative transfer. This can be attenuated by attention to Irish-specific spelling rules and decoding skills in Irish reading education. Without explicit awareness of Irish sound-spelling correspondences, the consistencies can be overshadowed by the differences from familiar English spelling conventions, making it seem that, in the words of the frustrated learner cited in (10) "it makes no sense at all." This is all the more true for young learners who have not yet mastered their L1 system when they begin learning their L2. Thus, we have argued that, not only can Irish spelling be taught as a semi-regular system, it must be.

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Formal and Colloquial Register in Welsh as seen in

Alice in Wonderland

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Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was first published in English in 1865. Translations into foreign languages started coming just a few years later, with the French and the German editions both in 1869. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries would see translations into dozens more languages including five of the Celtic languages, with both Irish and Cornish getting two different translations apiece. The Celtic translations appeared under the following titles (with language and year following each title):[1]

Eachtraḋ Eiḃlís i ḋTír na nIonġantas (Irish, 1922)

Anturiaethau Alys yng Ngwlad Hud (Welsh, 1953; 1982)

Alys y'n Vro a Varthusyon (Cornish, 1990)

Troioù-kaer Alis e Bro ar Marzhoù (Breton, 1995)

Eachtraí Eilíse i dTír na nIontas (Irish, 2003)

Alys in Pow an Anethow(Cornish, 2009)

Eachdraidh Ealasaid ann an Tìr na Iongantas (Scottish Gaelic, 2013)

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1 This information is assembled in part from the Wikipedia article entitled "Translations of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland".

The Welsh case is a bit unusual in that the two published translations, of 1953 and 1982, were both penned by the same man, Selyf Roberts. Born in 1912, Roberts was the author of at least seven novels published between 1959 and 1981, as well as several other collections of writings. He first came to public attention upon winning the Prose Medal at the 1955 Welsh National Eisteddfod for a collection of writings later published under the title *Deg o'r Diwedd* (Ten at Last). Roberts' body of work earned him an entry in the volume *Cydymaith i Lenyddiaeth Cymru* (Companion to the Literature of Wales) (Stephens 1986).[2]

Roberts' motivations for producing a second Welsh translation of *Alice* are sketched out in the Foreword to the 1982 edition, which is repeated in a 2010 reprinting along with a new and longer Foreword by Michael Everson. First, the 1953 translation was an abridgement, with certain chapters left out entirely or shortened and combined with another chapter; the twelve chapters of the English original were reduced to eight chapters in the 1953 Welsh abridgement. The Foreword notes that Roberts felt, nearly thirty years later, that it was time to do an unabridged translation. Secondly, the 1953 translation was fairly literary and formal in style. In the Foreword to the new version of 1982, justifying the need for a new translation, Roberts wrote, "Yn y cyfamser newidiodd, ie tyfodd, y Gymraeg, gan ystwytho yn ei phrifiant, a chan hynny teimlwn nad ofer y dasg o drosi o newydd." ("In the meantime the Welsh language changed, yes grew, becoming more flexible in its growth, and thus I felt that the task of translating anew was not in vain."). Michael Everson's Foreword to the 2010 edition adds that Roberts felt that the first translation "needed to be replaced by a full-length fresh translation in a somewhat more natural style" (page vii).

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2 It appears that he wrote at least one novel since the 1986 biography in Stephens (1986). Entitled *Cyfrinach Mai,* it was published by Gwasg Gee in 1993. I have not been able to learn anything about Roberts more recent than that date.

The end result is the somewhat unusual state of affairs in which the contemporary reader can read two versions of a familiar story, penned by the same writer almost thirty years apart, one in a formal, literary Welsh and the other in a more contemporary and colloquial style. The two versions are more similar than they would be if two different writers had produced translations of the text independently of one another. The biggest difference is that the second translation is unabridged and thus renders the full content of the beloved English story. Nonetheless, the difference in register is unmistakable.

The existence of these two versions of the same text that differ from each other almost entirely in terms of register is of some pedagogical interest for the intermediate or advanced learner of Welsh. Indeed, the student of Modern Welsh needs to learn to adapt to a considerable range of variation. A fair amount of this variation is attributable to regional dialects, which come mainly in two flavors, northern and southern (though both of these display internal variation as well). But significant further variation in Welsh is attributable solely to register, or the level of formality or informality, which forms a continuum between literary or formal Welsh and modern colloquial Welsh. To be sure, Roberts' two versions of the Welsh *Alice in Wonderland* are not as far apart in register as they could have been—the formal 1953 version is not quite as literary as, say, D. J. Williams' autobiography *Hen Dŷ Ffarm*, published in the same year, nor is the 1982 translation nearly as colloquial as much of the literature being published today—but the two versions are nonetheless far enough apart in register to make their juxtaposition singularly instructive about some of the major differences between formal and informal Welsh.

In what follows, I will identify a number of features relevant to register variation in Welsh, illustrating each with several examples drawn mostly from the first two chapters of *Alys*. The choice of features was guided entirely by the features that appear with some frequency in the texts, so this essay is not by any means intended as an exhaustive survey of Welsh register variation.

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Nevertheless, the resulting catalog of linguistic variables is sufficiently complete to serve as fodder for teaching the basics of register variation in Welsh.

Each example consists of three parallel lines of text. The first is the English, from Lewis Carroll's original text (cited here from the Signet Classic edition of 1960). The second is from the 1953 translation in formal or literary Welsh (henceforth referred to as LW); the third is from the 1982/2010 translation in something closer to Colloquial Welsh (henceforth CW). Each of the three quoted versions is followed by the page number from the source work. In some cases, when the Welsh translations involve a substantial reworking of the sentence so that the feature being illustrated does not directly map onto the English original, a literal translation of the relevant portion of the Welsh text is given in a fourth line. In many cases, only part of a sentence is quoted; this is indicated by the use of "…" to represent elided material. The particular feature being illustrated is indicated in bold underline in the three parallel versions, but the reader should note that there may be other linguistic differences between the two Welsh versions in addition to the feature being illustrated.

With these conventions in mind, we turn now to an examination of eleven features of register variation in Welsh as seen in *Alys*.

1. Subject pronouns

LW (like older stages of Welsh in general) is a null-subject language, more or less like Modern Spanish or Italian, in which subject pronouns are not obligatory; in fact, they are generally not included unless special emphasis or topic-shifting is needed. CW, on the other hand, is more like Modern English or French in that subject pronouns are (more or less) obligatory. The CW version of *Alys* thus often differs from the 1953 text in adding subject pronouns (which are postverbal in Welsh):

…it occurred to her **she ought** to have wondered at this… (19)

…sylweddolodd y **dylai** fod wedi synnu… (11)

… fe sylweddolodd y **dylai hi** fod wedi synnu… (7)

I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to? (20)

…ond pa hydred a lledred **ydyw**, tybed? (12)

…ond pa Hydred a Lledred **ydi o**, tybed? (9)[3]

(lit. "…but what Latitude and Longitude **is it**, I wonder?")

…the loveliest garden **you** ever **saw**. (22)

…yr ardd dlysach a **welsoch** erioed. (14)

…yr ardd dlysach a **welsoch chi** erioed. (11)

In some cases, the inclusion of a subject pronoun entails changes in the verb ending that immediately precedes it. For first person singular (1sg) verb forms in the future tense, the inclusion of the subject pronoun *i* in CW is almost always accompanied by the elision of the final –*f* (pronounced [v]) of the verb ending. The elision is often represented with an apostrophe:

"Oh dear! Oh dear! **I shall be** too late!" (19)

O'r annwyl! O'r annwyl! Mi **fyddaf** yn rhy hwyr! (11)

O'r annwyl! O'r annwyl! Mi **fydda' i** 'n rhy hwyr! (7)

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3 In addition to adding the subject pronoun *o* (northern form of the 3sg masculine pronoun), the 1982 text has replaced the literary verb form *ydyw* 'is' with the northern colloquial form *ydi*.

I wonder if **I shall** fall right *through* the earth? (21)

Tybed a **wnaf** syrthio *drwy'r* ddaear! (13)

Tybed **wna' i** syrthio *trwy ganol* y ddaear!? (9)

Third person plural verbs end in *–nt* in LW, but when the 3pl pronoun *nhw* 'they' is used in CW, the verb inflection regularly loses its final *–t*:

"**I do wish they *would*** put their heads down!" (29)

"mi **garwn** pe ***baent*** yn rhoi eu pennau wrth y twll!" (21)

"mi **garwn i** pe ***baen* nhw** 'n rhoi eu pennau wrth y twll!" (20)

2. Pronominal complements of inflected prepositions

Inflected prepositions have undergone precisely the same change as inflected verbs; in LW an inflected preposition does not generally have an overt pronominal complement, whereas in CW, the pronoun is virtually obligatory. In some cases inclusion of the pronoun entails reduced inflectional endings on the preposition, with or without an apostrophe (e.g. 1sg *–af* > *a'*, 3pl *–ynt* > *-yn*):

There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid… (21)

'D oes yma ddim llygod yn yr awyr, mae **arnaf** ofn… (13)

Does yma ddim llygod yn yr awyr, mae **arna' i** ofn… (10)

 (lit. "…in the air, is **on-me** fear…")

I wish you were down here with me! (21)

Buasai'n dda **gennyf** dy gael di gyda mi yma! (13)

Mi fuasai'n dda **gen i** pe baet ti i lawr yma hefo mi! (10)

(lit. would-be good **with me**…")

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…but at any rate it would not open any **of them**. (22)

…o achos nid agorai'r un **ohonynt**. (14)

…oherwydd wnâi hi ddim agor yr un **ohonyn nhw**. (11)

3. Certain verb forms

There are occasional examples of literary verb forms that are no longer used in speech. This includes certain literary verb stems such as *deu-* for 'come' (which is mostly replaced by *do-* in CW), and a number of third person singular preterites ending in the inflectional suffix *–s*, which has been supplanted by *–odd*. The 1982/2010 translation generally replaces literary forms like these with the modern forms:

…how in the world she was to get out again. (20)

...heb feddwl o gwbl sut yn y byd mawr y **deuai** allan eto. (12)

...heb feddwl o gwbl sut yn y byd mawr y **dôi hi** allan eto. (8)

 (lit. "…**would come** (she) out again.")

She was close behind it when she **turned** the corner… (21)

Yr oedd Alys bron ar ei sodlau pan **droes** y gornel… (14)

Roedd Alys bron ar ei sodlau pan **drodd** hi'r gornel… (10)

A number of literary verb stems also involve an internal vowel change, such as the stem *cedw-* from the verb *cadw* 'to keep'. In this case, the preterite *cedwais* 'I kept' was replaced by a future perfect:

> Won't she be savage if I've **kept** her waiting? (27)
>
> Mi fydd wedi gwylltio os **cedwais** hi'n disgwyl! (19)
>
> Mi fydd o'i cho'n las os **bydda' i wedi'i chadw** hi'n disgwyl! (18)

4. Synthetic versus periphrastic verb forms

In certain verb tenses, LW has synthetic (one-word) verb forms that are either no longer used at all in CW, or that are used less frequently, being replaced partially or entirely by a periphrastic expression involving a helping verb and a verbal noun. For instance, the imperfect, a past tense which is used for events that are represented as unfolding or in progress, has a synthetic conjugation in LW. The same form also serves as the conditional mood. Thus, *canai* in LW can mean 'he was singing/used to sing' (as an imperfect), and 'he would sing' (as a conditional). In modern CW, a synthetic form like *canai* has largely been replaced by periphrastic forms consisting of an inflected form of the verb *bod* 'to be', followed by the particle *yn* and a verbal noun. Thus, 'he was singing' is generally *roedd e'n canu* in CW (*roedd* is the 3sg imperfect of 'to be'), and 'he would sing' is generally *byddai fe'n canu* (*byddai* is the 3sg conditional of 'to be').

> …the hot day **made** her feel very sleepy and stupid… (19)
>
> …**gwnâi** 'r dydd tesog iddi deimlo'n gysglyd a swrth… (11)
>
> …**roedd** y diwrnod tesog **yn gwneud** iddi deimlo'n gysglyd a swrth… (7)

…but at the time it all **seemed** quite natural. (19)

…ond ar y pryd **ymddangosai** 'r cwbl yn hollol naturiol. (11)

…ond ar y pryd **roedd yn ymddangos** yn hollol naturiol. (7)

Either the well was very deep, or she **fell** very slowly… (20)

Naill ai yr oedd y ffynnon yn ddofn iawn neu **syrthiai** hi'n araf deg iawn…
(12)

Naill ai roedd y ffynnon yn ddofn iawn neu **roedd** hi'n **syrthio** 'n araf deg
iawn… (8)

The text also contains examples of this literary imperfect/conditional
with conditional interpretation. The variable nature of the preference is illus-
trated in that the following if/then sentence contains two synthetic condi-
tionals in the 1953 version (*cymerech* 'you would take' and *gwelech* 'you would
see'). The first of these is kept in the 1982/2010 version, but the second is
replaced by the periphrastic *baech chi'n gweld*:

I think you'd take a fancy to cats, if you **could** only **see** her. (31)

…credaf y cymerech ffansi at gathod pe **gwelech** hi. (23)

…rydw i'n meddwl y cymerech chi at gathod pe **baech** chi **'n 'i gweld** hi.
(22)

The change from synthetic (simplex) forms to periphrastic forms affects
some other tenses as well, such as the pluperfect:

…for it flashed across her mind that she **had** never before **seen** a rabbit…
(19)

…oblegid fflachiodd i'w meddwl na **welsai** erioed o'r blaen gwningen… (11)

… oblegid gwawriodd arni'n sydyn nad **oedd** erioed o'r blaen **wedi gweld**
cwningen… (7)

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Finally, the preterite is sometimes found in LW where we would expect a present perfect today. The Welsh present perfect is a periphrasis using *wedi* 'after', i.e. 'he has fallen' is *mae e wedi syrthio* (or *cwympo*), literally 'is he after falling'.

> I wonder how many miles **I've fallen** by this time? (20)
>
> Ysgwn i pa sawl milltir y **syrthiais** erbyn hyn? (12)
>
> Ysgŵn i pa sawl milltir **yr ydw i wedi cwympo** erbyn hyn? (9)

5. Interrogative and relative particles

In LW, certain sentence types are generally marked by a preverbal clause-initial particle. For instance, normal (non-focus) questions begin with the particle *a*. In CW this particle is virtually never overt, though the soft mutation it causes on the verb is always present (thus, *medrech* and *dar(f)u* become *fedrech* and *ddar(f)u*):

> Do you think you could manage it? (21)
>
> **A fedrech** chi, tybed? (13)
>
> **Fedrech** chi, ysgwn i? (10)
>
> (lit. "**Could you**, I wonder?")

> "Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?" (21)
>
> "Yn awr, Deina, dywed y gwir: **a ddarfu** iti erioed fwyta 'stlum?" (13-14)
>
> "Nawr, Deina, dwed y gwir: **ddaru** ti fwyta ystlum ryw dro?" (10)
>
> (lit. "…**happened** to you to eat a bat?")

> I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth? (21)
>
> Tybed **a wnaf** syrthio *drwy'r* ddaear! (13)
>
> Tybed **wna' i** syrthio *trwy ganol* y ddaear!? (9)

The particle *a* also occurs to mark certain relative clauses in LW, and here too, it is deleted in CW though leaving behind a soft mutation (where applicable):

> First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to… (20)
>
> Ar y dechrau ceisiodd edrych i lawr i weld pa beth **a** 'i harhosai… (12)
>
> Ar y dechrau ceisiodd edrych i lawr i weld beth oedd yn ei haros… (9)
>
> (lit. "…what was awaiting her…")

6. Preverbal particles with forms of *bod* 'to be'

In LW, certain forms of the verb *bod* 'to be', in affirmative declarative sentences, are customarily preceded by a particle which takes the form *yr* before a vowel and *y* before a consonant.[4] In CW, the form *yr* is usually fused with the verb and written solid, with no apostrophes, whereas the form *y* is usually omitted altogether:

> Alice **was** beginning to get very tired (20)
>
> **Yr oedd** Alys yn dechrau blino… (11)
>
> **Roedd** Alys yn dechrau blino… (7)

---

4 This particle is homophonous with the definite article in Modern Welsh.

Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think… (20)

 'Rhoswch chi, byddai hynny'n bedair mil o filltiroedd i lawr, **'r wy** 'n meddwl… (12)

'Rhoswch chi, byddai hynny'n bedair mil o filltiroedd i lawr, **rwy** 'n meddwl… (9)

 (Lit. "…**am** I thinking")

"Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I should think!" (21)

 "**Y mae** 'n siŵr y bydd yn chwith gan Deina ar fy ôl i heno." (13)

"**Mae** 'n siŵr y bydd yn chwith gan Deina ar f'ôl i heno." (10)

(lit. "**is** sure that (it) will be awkward with Dinah after me tonight")

The same is true of the negative preverbal particle *nid*. In LW this particle is spelled out in full as a separate word, or contracted to just its final consonant though still represented as a contraction by means of a preceding apostrophe and a following blank space. In CW, it is generally fused with vowel-initial forms of *bod* 'to be':

There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that… (19)

Nid oedd dim yn od yn hynny… (11)

Doedd yna ddim yn od *iawn* yn hynny… (7)

 (lit. "**Not was** (there) anything…")

There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid… (21)

'D oes yma ddim llygod yn yr awyr, mae arnaf ofn… (13)

Does yma ddim llygod yn yr awyr, mae arna'i ofn… (10)

 (lit. "**Not is (there)**…")

It should be noted that many aspects of Welsh are variable, even within a single text. For instance, in an example we saw above, "I've fallen" (from *Alice* page 20) appears in the CW translation as: *Ysgŵn i pa sawl milltir **yr ydw i wedi cwympo** erbyn hyn?* (9) The form **yr ydw** is quite often fused as **rydw** in CW, and indeed that form occurs in numerous places in the CW *Alys*, but this example offers a teachable moment revealing that Welsh norms are often fluid with respect to striking a balance between more literary and more colloquial forms, and different forms often coexist peacefully in the same text.

7. Preverbal affirmative particles

In certain cases, such as with the verb *bod* in the future and conditional, and with most other verbs regardless of tense, it is CW, not LW, which often includes a preverbal particle in affirmative declarative sentences. The claim is routinely made that this particle takes the form *fe* in southern dialects and *mi* in northern dialects; while broadly true, the contemporary translation of *Alice* makes some use of both particles, a pattern which is not unknown in other contemporary writing as well. *Fe* and *mi* both cause soft mutation of the following verb, when that verb starts with a mutable consonant:

… it occurred to her she ought to have wondered at this… (19)

… **sylweddolodd** y dylai fod wedi synnu… (11)

… **fe sylweddolodd** y dylai hi fod wedi synnu… (7)

(lit. "(she) **realized** that she ought…")

I wish you were down here with me! (21)

Buasai 'n dda gennyf dy gael di gyda mi yma! (13)

Mi fuasai 'n dda gen i pe baet ti i lawr yma hefo mi! (10)

(lit. "**Would-be** good with me…")

8. Postverbal negative reinforcement

A verb can be negated in LW simply with a preverbal negative element, generally *ni(d)* in main clauses and *na(d)* in subordinate clauses. Inclusion of an optional, post-verbal element *ddim* is possible for emphasis. In CW this negative *ddim* (or its allomorph *mo*, used before definite direct objects) is virtually obligatory in main clauses and very frequent in subordinate clauses. Its inclusion accompanies the reduction of the preverbal particle to just <d> before vowel-initial forms of 'to be':

…though this was not a *very* good opportunity… (20)

..er **nad** oedd hwn yn gyfle da iawn… (12)

..er **nad** oedd hwn **ddim** yn gyfle *da iawn*… (12)

Alice had not the slightest idea… (20)

Nid oedd gan Alys y syniad lleiaf… (12-13)

Doedd gan Alys **mo**'r syniad lleiaf… (9)

Alice was not a bit hurt… (21)

Nid oedd Alys wedi brifo o gwbl… (14)

Doedd Alys **ddim** wedi ei hanafu o gwbl… (10)

(lit. "**not-was** Alice **(not)** after (her) injuring at all…")

I can't remember half of them… (32)

…**nid wyf** yn cofio'u hanner… (23)

…**dydw i ddim** yn cofio eu hanner nhw… (23)

(lit. "**not-am (I) (not)** in remembering…")

With verbs other than 'to be', the contrast in negation is stark: LW uses the preverbal particle and CW uses postverbal *ddim*:

> "**I won't** indeed!" said Alice… (31)
>
> "**Na wnaf** yn wir!" ebe Alys… (23)
>
> "**Wna' i ddim** yn wir!" ebe Alys… (23)

For rhetorical questions, LW has the special sentence-initial particle *onid* which is simultaneously interrogative and negative. Like many of the preverbal particles, *onid* has fallen out of use in contemporary CW, which may construct its rhetorical questions using only the postverbal negator *ddim*, accompanied by no preverbal particle at all:

> Would the fall *never* come to an end? (20)
>
> **Onid** oedd diwedd i'r codwm?
>
> Oedd yna **ddim** *diwedd* i'r codwm 'ma?

9. Lexical substitutions

There are two sorts of vocabulary replacements found sporadically between the 1953 translation and its 1982 successor. The first sort involves cases where an older form of a word has been replaced by an evolved form of the same word. The following three citations illustrate six examples of this, pertaining to the following words (the first form in each pair is the older one found in the literary translation): **dyfod / dod** 'to come'; **pobl / pobol** 'people'; **chwithau / chithau** 'you (conjunctive form)'; **yn awr / nawr** 'now'; **dywed / dwed** 'tell, say (2sg imperative)'; **darfu / ddaru** 'happened' [preterite of the verb **darfod** 'to happen', which becomes an auxiliary used to construct periphrastic preterites in northern dialects]:

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How funny it'll seem to **come** out among the **people** that walk with their heads downwards! (21)

Dyna od fydd **dyfod** allan ymhlith **pobl** sy'n cerdded â'u pennau i lawr! (13)

Dyna beth od fydd **dod** allan ymhlith **pobol** yn cerdded â'u pennau i lawr! (9)

Fancy *curtseying* as **you**'re falling through the air! (21)

…meddylwich am wneud cyrtsi a **chwithau**'n syrthio trwy'r awyr! (13)

…meddylwich am wneud cyrtsi a **chithau**'n syrthio trwy'r awyr! (10)

"**Now**, Dinah, **tell** me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?" (21)

"**Yn awr**, Deina, **dywed** y gwir: a **ddarfu** iti erioed fwyta 'stlum?" (13-14)

"**Nawr**, Deina, **dwed** y gwir: **ddaru** ti fwyta ystlum ryw dro?" (10)

(lit. "…the truth: **happened** to-you ever…")

The second kind of vocabulary substitution involves cases where a word has partially or even entirely fallen out of use and been replaced by a different word in CW style. The following examples illustrate this kind of substitution for the words **tybio / meddwl** 'to think'; **oblegid / oherwydd** 'for, because'; **hwyrach / efallai** 'perhaps'; and **ymaith / i ffwrdd** 'away':

…nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way… (19)

…ac ni **thybiodd** Alys fod cymaint â *hynny* allan o le… (11)

…ac ni **feddyliodd** Alys fod *cymaint* â hynny o'i le… (7)

…**for** she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her… (20)[5]

…**oblegid** cafodd ddigon o amser wrth ddisgyn i edrcyh o'i chwmpas… (12)

…**oherwydd** cafodd ddigon o amser wrth ddisgyn i edrcyh o'i hamgylch… (8)

…perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere. (21)

…**hwyrach** y gwelaf yr enw yn rhywle. (13)

…**efallai** y gwela' i 'r enw yn rhywle. (10)

…**away** went Alice like the wind. (21)

…**ymaith** ag Alys fel y gwynt; (14)

…**i ffwrdd** ag Alys fel y gwynt. (10)

10. Dialect features

In keeping with the less literary nature of the revised translation, Roberts occasionally introduced dialect features. The LW version of 1953 is almost entirely devoid of any regional features and simply conveys a very standard literary flavor. The 1982/2010 version, although hardly counting as a text written in dialect, does contain a sprinkling of northern forms. We have already encountered a few of these: the 3sg masculine pronoun *(f)o* is markedly northern (as opposed to *(f)e* which is southern), as is the preverbal particle *mi* (versus *fe*):

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5 The reader will note an additional substitution in this example, in which the directional particle *o gwmpas* 'around, about' [here in the 3sg feminine form *o'i chwmpas*] has given way to *o amgylch* [3sg feminine form *o'i hamgylch*]. This substitution, however, does not seem to be motivated by replacing a more literary with a more colloquial form; if anything, this replacement goes in the opposite direction. This substitution must simply reflect a changed stylistic preference of the translator in this context.

I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to? (20)

…ond pa hydred a lledred **ydyw**, tybed? (12)

…ond pa Hydred a Lledred **ydi o**, tybed? (9)

(lit. "…but what Latitude and Longitude **is it**, I wonder?")

I wish you were down here with me! (21)

Buasai 'n dda gennyf dy gael di gyda mi yma! (13)

Mi fuasai 'n dda gen i pe baet ti i lawr yma hefo mi! (10)

(lit. "**would be** good with me…")

The form *ddaru*, etymologically from the preterite of *darfod* 'to happen', was seen above as well. The pattern in the 1953 text, taking the form *darfu i* + subject + lenited verbal noun, can be construed as simply a literary pattern, whereas the CW version *ddaru* + subject + lenited verbal noun is a northern dialect feature not used in South Walian. (If this were a CW text with a South Walian flavor, the literary *darfu* pattern would most likely have been replaced by a simple preterite, *fywtaist ti…?*):

"Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?" (21)

"Yn awr, Deina, dywed y gwir: a **ddarfu iti erioed fwyta** 'stlum?" (13-14)

"Nawr, Deina, dwed y gwir: **ddaru ti fwyta** ystlum ryw dro?" (10)

The following three cases also illustrate clear northern features: the preposition *hefo* for *gyda* 'with', the reduction of the sentence tag *wyddost (ti)* 'you know' to just *wsti*, and the verb *medru* 'to be able' (cf. standard/southern *gallu*):

> I wish you were down here **with me**! (21)
>
> Buasai'n dda gennyf dy gael di **gyda mi** yma! (13)
>
> Mi fuasai'n dda gen i pe baet ti i lawr yma **hefo mi**! (10)

> "…and that's very like a mouse, **you know.**" (21)
>
> "…ac y mae hwnnw'n debyg iawn i lygoden, **wyddost**." (13)
>
> "…ac y mae hwnnw'n debyg iawn i lygoden, **wsti**." (10)

> "Y mae popeth mor od i lawr yma, y tebyg yw y **gall** hi siarad." (22)
>
> "Mae popeth mor od i lawr yma, y tebyg yw ei bod hi'n **medru** siarad." (21)
>
> "Everything is so out-of-the-way down here, that I should think it very likely that it **can** talk;" (30)

The last example above reveals that the later translation is still in very standard Welsh with only a modest sprinkling of regional features. The same clause that contains the markedly northern *medru* also includes the standard form *yw* 'is'. In a rigorously northern text this would be *ydi*.

The ten features illustrated above all show a clear move away from a fairly literary translation to a more colloquial one. Before closing our study, let us look briefly at an eleventh feature which arguably goes in the opposite direction—that is, making the later translation in a certain way less colloquial than the 1953 translation.

11. English influence

Fascinatingly, there is one type of feature whereby Roberts' revised translation is, in a particular way, arguably less colloquial than the original 1953 translation. This concerns the place accorded to English influence. In most cases, Welsh speakers are more tolerant of English borrowings and calques in informal registers than in formal style, where people are more attentive to language issues. However, there appear to be several places where the 1953 *Alys* had manifest anglicisms which were removed in the revised translation. This includes borrowings: **pasio** is replaced with **mynd heibio** 'to pass, go past'; **ffan** with **gwyntyll** 'fan'; **diar** with **annwyl** 'dear (interjection)'; and **cymryd ffansi at** 'take a fancy to' with **cymryd at** 'take to'. And the phrasal verb calque **torri i lawr**, literally 'to break down (i.e. crying)', is replaced with **beichio crio** 'burst out crying':[6]

> …so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell **past it**. (20)
>
> …felly llwyddodd i'w daro yn un o'r cypyrddau wrth **basio**. (12)
>
> …felly llwyddodd i'w daro yn un o'r cypyrddau wrth **fynd heibio**. (12)
>
> Alice took up the **fan** and gloves… (28)
>
> Cododd Alys y **ffan** a'r menyg… (19)
>
> Cododd Alys y **wyntyll** a'r menyg… (18)
>
> "but, **oh dear!**" cried Alice, with a sudden **burst of tears**… (29)
>
> "Ond **O, diar**!" ebe Alys gan **dorri i lawr** eto… (21)
>
> "Ond **o'r annwyl**," ebe Alys gan **feichio crio**'n sydyn eto… (20)

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6 The verb *crio* 'to cry' is ultimately from English, but it is a very well-established borrowing that probably no one would consider an anglicism today.

I think you'd **take a fancy to cats**, if you could only see her. (31)

…credaf y **cymerech ffansi at gathod** pe gwelech hi. (23)

…rydw i'n meddwl y **cymerech chi at gathod** pe baech chi 'n 'i gweld hi. (22)

It seems very unlikely, however, that Roberts eliminated these anglicisms with the intention of making the text less colloquial; indeed, that would be a very strange result, given his declared intentions in the Foreword as quoted earlier, and the ten features already examined which go in the opposite direction. These removals of anglicisms are almost certainly attributable to changes in language attitudes between the middle and the end of the twentieth century, namely an increased awareness of the influence of English on Welsh and, most likely, an increased perception that this influence represented a threat to the integrity of the Welsh language. If anything, then, these changes have more to do with language loyalty and ideology than with register per se.

Conclusions

The juxtaposition of Selyf Roberts' 1953 and 1982 translations of *Alice in Wonderland* affords the Welsh instructor an interesting way to teach various aspects of register variation in Welsh. Here we have surveyed some of the prominent ways in which Literary Welsh differs from modern Colloquial Welsh, considering in particular: the absence or presence of overt pronouns with inflected verbs and inflected prepositions; the preference for synthetic or periphrastic verb tenses such as the imperfect; the use of preverbal particles of various kinds; the matter of simple (preverbal) versus reinforced (circumverbal) negation; vocabulary changes; and the presence of dialect features.

In terms of pedagogical treatment, once these features have been identified in the first two chapters of the text, students can be given other chapters to work with to identify examples of these or other features. It is

also important that their attention be drawn to the variable nature of most of these features; that is, rather than being used 100% of the time or not at all, most are matters of relative frequency. For instance, although CW prefers overt subject pronouns and periphrastic imperfects, the 1982/2010 translation of *Alice* does nonetheless contain occasional examples of null subjects and of the literary synthetic imperfect. Thus neither of these features is categorical, though a very clear preference can be shown using the *Alys* texts.

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An American Abroad: My adult language immersion studies in Brittany

Madeleine Adkins

Abstract

In this article, the author describes her experiences as a North American student in a six-month intensive Breton language program in Brittany. Topics include choosing the right program, the application process, obtaining a long-term stay French visa, finding housing, the different stages of the language immersion program, the dialect focus of the program, the internships, the instructors, the students, and everyday life during the program.

In 2010, I relocated from the U.S. to Brittany to attend a six-month intensive Breton language program for adults. I had first encountered Breton in a university course I had taken six years earlier, and had subsequently attended a number of one-week immersion courses while on research trips to Brittany during my graduate studies since then. My Breton language conversational skills were minimal, so I decided that I would enroll in one of

the longer immersion courses that I had heard of—this would allow me to increase my level of fluency, as well as offer me a more experiential understanding of the language revitalization movement in Brittany.

Selecting a program

There are four schools—Mervent, Roudour, Skol an Emsav, and Stumdi—that offer six-month Breton language immersion programs for adults. Each program is somewhat different in character, but all of them are designed to give students a solid, basic competence in spoken Breton—enough fluency to be able to work in a Breton language or bilingual work environment. The program fees, course hours, and course dates (fall to spring, and some also have winter to summer programs) are roughly the same. This is by design: most of the students who attend the program receive government funding to attend these programs, as employed workers or job seekers who would benefit professionally from Breton language study. As such, these programs are structured around a normal French workweek schedule, and attendance policies are strictly enforced. There are some differences in pedagogical approach, as discussed below. However, the most obvious difference is that each program offers these six-month intensives in different locations.

Each of the schools also offers other types of language programs, such as week-long language intensives, weekly language courses, and profession-specific shorter courses. I had previously taken one-week language intensives with both Roudour and Stumdi, so I had a sense of the general organizational and pedagogical approaches, as well as where the courses were offered. This all helped me to decide where—and with whom—to study.

I selected Stumdi for a number of reasons. First of all, I preferred their curriculum and methodologies over Roudour's. Roudour's pedagogical approach incorporates more non-traditional language teaching styles. To some degree, these less traditional approaches can be beneficial to kick-start

conversational ability. However, I disliked some of the teaching materials used in their programs, and I also found that one of the methodologies that they used was frustrating for me as a native English speaker: it involved listening to a short dramatic text in Breton while reading along in French, and that was too much linguistic work for a non-native speaker of both languages. Secondly, at that time, Roudour only offered six-month intensives in the center of Brittany, and I preferred that my Breton stay be near the coast.

Stumdi, the largest of the adult Breton language schools, has programs in a variety of locations, and I had already visited two of them: Landerne[1] and Plañvour. There were tradeoffs, depending upon which location I chose. If I had chosen Landerne, I would have benefited from the fact that it is Stumdi's headquarters, and I would have been able to arrange a home stay (via another Breton language organization) with a Breton-speaking farm family in the area. Naturally, the chance to live with Breton speakers would have been great for my Breton language skill development; however, given that the home stay would have been in a rural area, I would have needed a car to commute to school, and that was not an option for me. Plañvour was appealing for a variety of reasons: it offered sparkling white sand beaches, an urban bus system, a fairly large Breton city (An Oriant) nearby, and a milder climate. Perhaps the key deciding factor, however, was that a Breton friend of mine lived in the area, and I knew that having her nearby would make it much easier for me to find a place to live and to settle in when I arrived.

I was, apparently, one of the few foreigners who had ever participated in the Stumdi six-month intensive program—I knew of only two others—and I

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1 I have written all place names in Breton, as a matter of principle. French equivalents are as follows: Landerne = Landerneau, Plañvour = Ploemeur, An Oriant = Lorient, Brest = Brest, Kemper = Quimper, Ar Gerveur = le Guermeur, Kerroc'h = Kerroch, An Arvor = Larmor-Plage, Lann ar Ster = Lannester, Gwened = Vannes, Karaez = Carhaix, Roazhon = Rennes. Intel = Etel.

am the only one who was neither a resident of Brittany nor a person of Breton ancestry with French citizenship, and thus I was the only one to need a visa. Stumdi could not sponsor me, as it is not a university program, so I was on my own in getting a long-term stay visa for France.

French—the gateway language

For anyone considering attending a Breton language immersion program, French skills are important. If I had not already been competent in French, it would have been extremely difficult to plan for and survive the program, socially and academically. For the first few months, most of our instruction and social interaction was in French; in addition, most tests and some classroom practice exercises did involve French-Breton and Breton-French translation. I do know one graduate of the Roudour program who had not spoken French before she arrived in Brittany, so it is possible: however, she was already an EU citizen and a native speaker of Welsh, so she had other factors working in her favor. If your French is weak or non-existent, working on your French competency would be a good first move.

Applying for the program, getting a visa, and moving to Brittany

I applied in the spring for Stumdi's fall program. This allowed enough time for Stumdi's process to be completed before I began the visa process and all other necessary planning. After submitting my Stumdi application, I was interviewed via Skype by the head of the school and a Stumdi instructor. This turned out to be extremely brief, as their main objective was to confirm my French language abilities. In addition, it was a chance for us to talk about the program, and for me to ask some questions about Stumdi's ability to help with visas and housing. Because the people who take the course are typically local residents, these are not issues with which they normally deal, and there was not much that they could do. Nevertheless, they noted that

I would need housing during the program, and they did connect me with another student who was relocating to the Plañvour area so that we could share housing information.

As a non-EU citizen, I needed a long-term visitor visa to be able to legally stay in France for more than three months. The French visa process was laborious, bureaucratic, and at times, confusing, but in the end, it worked out.[2]

Obtaining a long-term visitor visa for France was a bit of a catch-22, in that I needed to secure housing before I could obtain the visa. With the help of my very kind and generous friend in Plañvour and a very useful French website (leboncoin.fr), I was able to locate and secure an apartment for my stay in Brittany; for anyone without a friend on the ground, this particular step might require a short trip to Brittany to view apartments in person, sign a contract with the landlord, pay a deposit, and obtain the necessary papers to submit when applying for the French visa.

A word about finding housing in Plañvour: as mentioned above, Plañvour has many lovely beaches, so housing was slightly more expensive than it would have been in—for example—Landerne. At the same time, because this was during the off-season for tourists, the rental prices were much more affordable and housing more available than would have been the case during the peak tourist seasons.

Once the housing issue was resolved, I was able to begin the visa process. The first step was determining the correct visa for which to apply and then gathering all of the necessary paperwork. This part of the process was confusing, as the information given on long-term visitor visa applications was different on different consular websites. I read the information on a number of

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2 Had I been planning to study Breton under the auspices of a French university, I would have been able to apply for a student visa. This appears to be a very different—and easier—visa process.

consular sites, called and emailed at least one consulate for more information (it was difficult to get anyone to respond to my questions), and did my best to make sense of it all before submitting my application. One of the key steps was to make my visa application appointment: it is required for all US citizens to submit their visa applications in person at their local consulate. Because I lived at the time in Colorado, I was required to apply to the French Consulate in Los Angeles, California, which is the consulate that is responsible for all of the southwestern US. I selected the date I wanted, and then booked my flight and hotel for the visa trip.

The documentation required for what is officially called the "long stay visa for visitors" includes an application form and approximately a dozen other documents, including a letter of intent, recent financial statements, proof of travel insurance, proof of accommodation, proof of an airplane ticket, a visa photo, and a current passport. Because people who have visitors' visas are not allowed to work in France while they are on the visa, one of the most important qualifications for getting a French long stay visa for visitors is proof that one can afford to live in France for the specified length of time without needing to work; in contrast, a student visa allows one to work part-time while enrolled as a student.

The visa appointment itself was relatively brief: I submitted my documents, had my fingerprints and photo taken, and paid the application fee. A few weeks later, I received my passport in the mail with my one-year French visa. (After I arrived in Brittany, there was one more bureaucratic step—a physical exam and a fee to be paid at the immigration office—that I needed to take to remain in good standing on my visa.)

Our study program – the first two months

During the first two months of the program, the teachers generally spoke to us in French as they explained Breton grammar and vocabulary, and we

were expected to speak Breton a little, but free to speak in French during class and our break times. We students were a mix of beginners and false beginners, but all of us needed work on the basics, and the lessons took us through the core Breton grammar.

Lessons were a mix of traditional grammar explanations and activities to practice what we had learned. As someone who has taught ESL/EFL and someone who has studied many languages herself, I tend to be a bit harsh in evaluating language pedagogy. Sometimes I was happier than other times during lessons, and teachers did vary in their styles and teaching philosophies. I tried to view things philosophically: if I especially liked or disliked something that we did in class, it was a chance for me to learn more about teaching while I was there. One big adjustment for me was the pace: my general impression is that traditional lessons move more slowly and a bit more formally in France than in the U.S., and this slower pace was sometimes challenging for me.

One key difference between U.S. language immersion programs and what I observed at Stumdi was how teachers were rotated: each day, we had a different teacher, and we had that teacher all day. (I believe that this is the structure for Roudour, as well, as our one-week intensives were similarly arranged.) This means that the teacher is required to come up with a day-long lesson plan for the class, which meant almost 8 hours' worth of activity, and that is not easy.

There was no textbook, per se, for the class, but there was some type of overall curriculum that the teachers followed, specifying what was to be covered on a weekly basis, and each teacher left notes for the next teacher, outlining what had been covered that day. The informality of the structure allowed for the teachers to approach the lessons in their own ways, while still keeping the class on schedule. There were handouts for some materials, but a great deal of the transmission consisted of the teacher explaining and writing

things on the board, and the students listening and taking notes. The practice activities were livelier and more creative, and got us out of our seats and sometimes took us outdoors.

There were individual language skills tests on a regular basis, checking our comprehension and production skills in conversational situations. I found these very stressful at first, but over time I worried less about them, as there were no formal grades. The tests seemed to be more about monitoring our progress. I also gave up thinking I could translate from French to Breton or from Breton to French, as my brain would not cooperate. In translation activities of this sort (in class or in tests), I would translate between Breton and English, and then add on the French, if necessary. Many of my teachers and classmates knew English fairly well, and I usually did not need to bother with the French at all.

In addition to our regular lessons, there were other activities that broke up the routine. There were occasional special joint-class activities, such as fieldtrips to see Breton language performances. Stumdi's job placement services were introduced to us, and most of the class participated, including me (to the degree that they let me—I do not think they knew what to do with me at times like that). We also had occasional visits from our class patron, the Breton singer Yann-Fañch Kemener, who taught us songs and generally encouraged us in our studies.

Our study program – the second two months

The second two months, the teachers began speaking only Breton to us, and began to push us to try and speak Breton a bit more, in and out of class. In many ways, the lessons were very similar in style to those of the first two months; however, this forced us to improve our Breton language comprehension skills, and some of my classmates began speaking Breton most of the time in class.

Again, there were special fieldtrips and activities. Job placement activities continued: we worked on our resumes in Breton, and began having guest speakers on related topics. A reporter from a Breton language TV program spoke to us and interviewed us on camera for a special New Year's themed episode she was producing. We also had an active holiday week before the winter break, including performances and a special cooking class: I played a blind saint in a not-overly-traditional nativity story, and we all learned to cook *kig-ha-fars*.

Our study program – the final two months

In the final two months, we were expected to use Breton both in class and during our break times, and everyone had adapted to the language fairly well by then. The focus of the lessons was on the refinement of our Breton skills, and the grammar lessons were of more complex features at this point. We also were encouraged to interact with native speakers whom we knew, and to record and transcribe some of their speech. We gave educational presentations to the class on the topic of our choice: mine was on California, my home state. Job placement activities began to play a greater role in the program: a panel of Breton language school leaders came and spoke to our class, and each of us participated in two week-long internships of our choice. (See below for more details about the internship process.) We also practiced and performed long scenes from Breton plays, learned more songs, and had some older native speakers visit our class and talk about their younger days, when Breton was spoken more commonly.

At this point in the program, I recall visiting some (non-Breton speaking) friends in Roazhon, and I found that my French was overlaid with Breton, and I was unable to speak in complete French utterances without some Breton word trying to work its way into my sentence. I realized that my French had slowly declined over the previous months—an apparent side

affect of using very little French and actively using Breton every day. My French returned to normal after the course, so this deterioration of my French had been some type of developmental stage in my mastery of Breton.

The Stumdi program ended with two days of special events: a Stumdi-wide meeting and scavenger hunt in Karaez for all the graduating students, a fieldtrip to the Intel river, and a visit to a TV studio where Breton language programs were produced.

The internships

The two internships that we did were a very important part of the program, given that the goal is to prepare students for using Breton in their future places of employment. We students were in charge of our own intern-ships, and Stumdi provided us with a list of typical internship sites and contact information to help us get started. Stumdi has its students do two week-long internships—one around the fourth month, and the other around the fifth. (Roudour has its students do three, which seems a lot to me, and which was another of the reasons I preferred Stumdi.)

The phone call that I made—in Breton, of course—to secure my first internship was perhaps the most difficult thing that I had to do during the entire six-month program. At that time, my classmates were beginning to feel comfortable speaking Breton, but I was still struggling to get Breton sentences to come out of my mouth. Nevertheless, I succeeded, and so off I went a few weeks later to spend the week at the Diwan *skolaj* (middle school) in Kemper. Everyone's internship is different, depending upon where they go, what they propose as their role, and the people with whom they work. For mine, I had said that I wanted to observe a variety of classes and help out in an English language class. I was introduced to many of the teachers and given a schedule of classes to visit—everything from math to Breton. In addition, I hung out with the teachers at break time, experienced cafeteria lunches, and

helped teach one English class. The teachers and students were welcoming, despite my halting Breton, and I learned a great deal about the challenges that Diwan schools face in France.

My second internship was at the *lise* (high school) in Karaez. For this internship, I had to first meet with the head of the school to get his approval. Once that was obtained, I was allowed to spend my internship at the *lise* and learn about this special high school. The *lise* is a boarding school—nearly all of its students live on-campus during the week. One reason for this is that this is the only Breton language high school, so students who attend come from all over Brittany; the other reason is that the *lise* is designed to be its own little world—a linguistic island in the middle of a French-speaking world—where young people can study, share meals, participate in sports and social activities, and develop friends for life, all in the Breton language. Here again, I got to know the teachers, observed a variety of classes, and I also helped out in an English class. By that time, my Breton language abilities had improved, which made it easier to be engaged in conversations in Breton and to follow what was being taught in the classes.

Kemper, the site of my first internship, is a short train ride from An Oriant, so it was easy to get to the *skolaj* on my own, and I chose to stay at a hotel in Kemper for two nights to make my commute easier. My internship in Karaez was much trickier logistically, and it was a moment when a car would have made everything much easier. To get to the *lise* for my interview, I took the train to Roazhon, stayed the night there with friends, took two trains to get to Karaez, and then walked from the train station to the *lise* campus. Going home, I took a long bus ride to southern Brittany, where I was able to catch a local train back to An Oriant. Clearly, I needed a place to stay in Karaez, and the folks at the *lise* kindly helped me to arrange to rent a basement bedroom in a house for the week. It was nothing fancy, but I could get my meals on campus, and I only needed to be there five nights.

School life at Stumdi

The school day began at nine, there was a mid-morning break of coffee, tea, and cookies (provided and organized by us students), then lunch at one, an afternoon break (again, with snacks), and then school ended promptly at five, when everyone jumped in their cars and headed home. Most of the students at our course were from the Gwened region. Some carpooled, some drove on their own, and some took the train from points farther east. I lived only a few minutes' drive from the center where our classes were held, and I usually carpooled with my neighbor, and occasionally took the bus.

Lunch was fairly short by official French standards, so we quickly determined that trying to eat at the one restaurant a short walk from our classes was not a realistic option. Neither was driving up to An Oriant to a nearby university cafeteria, where we Stumdi students were given a student discount. As a result, we generally brought our own lunches, which saved time. This was especially good for those of us who wanted to walk around the lake during lunch. Occasionally, when someone forgot their lunch, three or four people would bundle into someone's car and head into the center of Plañvour to pick up sandwiches from a bakery or prepared food from a deli. These small voyages were exciting for carless me, as I occasionally got tired of my own homemade lunches.

At transitional moments (usually, before a vacation period), this lunch pattern was interrupted when we all drove over to a nearby restaurant for a more relaxed lunch en masse, or we had a picnic on the grounds next to the building where classes were held.

My classmates

Our class was made up of seven women and three men. Most of my classmates were teachers, teachers' aides, or aspiring teachers—for Diwan, public bilingual schools, and Catholic bilingual schools. My classmates all lived in

Brittany, and most were ethnically Breton (or a mix). Some had parents who were native speakers of Breton from rural areas, but as was typical in the mid-twentieth century, those parents had not attempted to pass Breton on to their children, and rarely or never used it anymore. I know of one case where a classmate began speaking Breton with her parents during the course. After some initial reluctance and fear that their Breton was lost, her parents began responding in Breton, and eventually began using it more freely with her and with us, as well. Some of my classmates already spoke other languages quite well and had previously lived abroad, although they were all now settled in Brittany.

Most students were in their 20s to 40s, many had university degrees, and all had already been in the workforce, although some were currently unemployed. Some of them were already passionate about the Breton language, while for others, this was more of a pragmatic step towards finding a job.

I lucked out with a very lively, fun, and friendly class who made the days pass entertainingly. A couple of people knew each other before the course started, but the rest of us were strangers of various temperaments who would have to find a way to get along for the six months that we would be together. Our class was in fact so boisterous and assertive that it gained a reputation among some of the teachers as being the troublemakers: a challenging class that asked a lot of questions and that could get out of control. Some of the greener teachers—teachers who had less experience managing more challenging classroom personalities—apparently did their best to avoid us once they realized what we were like.

The other class next door (also ten) was also primarily made up of teachers and similar types of school professionals or aspirants. However, their personalities were more subdued, and much easier on teachers than my class was. My neighbor was in the other class. He was exceptional in that, although ethnically Breton, he had grown up just outside of Brittany, and he had

attended university in Paris. It worked out well for me that he and I ended up living a block apart.

For certain special lessons and events, the two groups came together and became a joint class. Given that we were all on more or less the same schedule, we all interacted with each other, but tended to gravitate to our own classmates.

Halfway through our program, a third course started up, with seventeen students in one class. Because they were three months behind us, and so large a group, our interactions with them were more limited and our Breton language levels were quite different. They appeared to progress more slowly than our two classes had—I do not know if that was a function of class size, or individual motivation levels and personality types.

I was the only foreigner there, and while my classmates were always friendly, I think that they were not sure what to make of me initially. We shared intercultural and interlingual jokes at break time, and we engaged in lively and open-minded discussions about our respective cultures. However, I think that initially they found it odd that an American who was not culturally Breton would want to move to Brittany for most of a year to learn their local language. By the end of the program, I felt that I had not only completed the course and begun to speak Breton more naturally, but perhaps proven my commitment to the language and culture—and therefore, to them, as well. By that time some of my classmates were going out of their way to take me sightseeing and inviting me along to special Breton cultural events, and it became clear that I had truly made friends—good friends whom I am happy to visit whenever I am able to return to Brittany.

Eight of my classmates were of Breton ancestry—at least in part—and the ninth was an "adopted" Breton who had grown up there and was already a talented Breton musician. So, all of them had had at least some exposure to the culture and music of Brittany, and many were well versed in the songs

and stories which were part of the culture. They had all been educated in the French national system, so they also shared a common educational background in terms of knowledge, expectations, and styles. They were also all native French speakers. This is the type of person for whom the program was designed, of course. I did not share this background, and all of these factors put me at a disadvantage in the classroom. For example, while my French was good enough to function in the classroom in general, when we learned Breton sayings, as we did weekly, I sometimes had a hard time understanding their meanings, as I tended not to know the equivalent French sayings; I had a similar challenge when the teachers taught us traditional songs, as it was difficult to keep up when most of the class already knew the words. It was frustrating at times for me, but my classmates were a great support in helping me to understand and keep up when my lack of cultural knowledge got in the way.

Our teachers and the dialect focus of our program

We had many teachers over the course of the year, and I got to know some better than others. Although they did not talk about their backgrounds initially, most of the teachers at some point revealed their histories with the Breton language. Most, it turned out, were not native speakers themselves. (As indicated above, for this generation, Breton native speakerhood is extremely rare in Brittany, due to a lack of intergenerational transmission.) These teachers had either taught themselves Breton on their own (via textbooks or correspondence courses), studied the language at school, or done some combination thereof. All displayed a genuine passion for the language, and despite their long teaching days, they consistently made themselves available at breaks and lunchtime to answer our questions and encouraged us to use our Breton in conversation as much as we could. They were all active in the Breton language scene outside of school in various ways, whether it

be teaching night school classes, organizing cultural events, participating in Breton music activities, or writing for Breton language publications.

Our class had two core teachers who each taught our class once a week or more. The other teachers—ten or so—would cycle through less often, and our core two provided us with some consistency. Our two core teachers were also our local dialect experts. This is a key feature of the Stumdi program—that in each Stumdi location, the teaching focuses, at least in part, on the local dialect. I was surprised to discover this, as it is in contrast to much of the existing academic literature on modern Breton language education. Breton language revitalization programs and Diwan immersion schools for children are typically described as purveyors of neo-Breton, a standardized language that has a great deal of literary influence. Instead, I found that Breton programs (including Diwan) tend to have a localized, dialectal flavor, with enough of the standardized Breton included to keep up with the school standards that currently exist.

Our sister class was a geographically mixed group, and as a result, they spent more time with teachers from other dialectal regions than our class did. Our class was almost all folks from the Gwened region, so our lessons almost always oriented towards the Gwenedeg (i.e. Vannetais dialect) dialect: even teachers from other dialect areas made it a point to provide the Gwenedeg version of whatever they were covering, as well as their own dialectal version. Gwenedeg is considered to be the most distinct of all the major dialects, and as such, its lexical inventory, phonology, and even some of its syntax are distinct from those of the other dialects. As a result, it is also the most marked dialect, the most likely to be perceived as difficult to understand by outsiders, and the one that tends to get made fun of in the wider Breton world. Most pedagogical materials available for Breton reflect what are known as the KLT dialects (Kerneveg, Leoneg, and Tregerieg), which are the predominant influences upon Standard Breton, so it requires specialists in the Gwenedeg dialect

to provide a good grounding in the local traditional speech, and the Plañvour Stumdi program was unique in providing that. My classmates were eager to learn the Gwened dialect and used it in their speech in and out of class. I was fascinated to learn the features of this generally overlooked dialect. Ironically, though, I was also the holdout when it came to speaking it—I studied it along with my classmates, but I spoke a more standardized (i.e. KLT-flavored) Breton. This was the case for two reasons: one was that my previous study of Breton had been of the more standard variety, and I found it easier to build upon that knowledge base; the other reason was that—as a foreigner who had been conducting research in different parts of Brittany—I felt that learning to speak a marked variety of the language would be confusing, and potentially off-putting, to Breton speakers outside the Gwened region. Even so, when I visited the *Lise Diwan*[3] in Karaez I discovered that I had not fully escaped the regional dialect—after my self-introduction to some of the teachers at lunch, one of them announced that I must be studying Breton in Gwened: unbeknownst to me, my pronunciation of the verbal infinitive suffix –*iñ* had become Gwenedized.

Everyday life during the six-month program

Because the language program is intensive, there is an enforced consistency of daily life during the six-month course: attendance in class is required, so Monday to Friday, from 9 to 5, life is school. There are morning and afternoon breaks, as well as lunch, of course, but the rest of the day is class time. During the winter months, this can be challenging, as sunrise occurs around 9:00 am and sunset is around 5:00 pm. Still, within the confines of the schedule, it was possible to get fresh air and some sun. Students were encouraged—when it wasn't rainy—to spend break time outside. Our classes were held at a Breton cultural center that sits on the site of a once grand 18th century

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3 Lise Diwan, as explained above, is the *lycée*, or high school, of the *Diwan* Breton language immersion schools.

chateau. The cultural center building is surrounded by parkland, and is near a scenic lake. Some of us chose to walk around the lake during the lunch break, even if it meant that we only had a few minutes to eat our lunches—I have fond memories of those walks and conversations with my classmates. Because we were at a cultural center, it also meant that we were able to benefit from some of the center's offerings, such as being able to listen to occasional concert rehearsals, as well as check out books and CDs from the onsite Breton language library.

Outside of the school day, simple rhythms also predominated. This was partly because the school day was so mentally demanding for me that I did not have much energy for extra activities during the week, and partly because I did not have a car. After school, I might pick up groceries in one of the shops in the city of Plañvour on the way home, or I might go straight home. If it was dark outside, then I did not venture out again, except to occasionally go to the one nearby restaurant, which was only open certain days in winter, or to visit my neighbor-classmate. When the days were long enough, I might go out for a walk to the beach or along the coast, pick up yummy bread or desserts at the village bakery, or ride by bike to a supermarket in a nearby village. For a few months, I was able to take a traditional Breton dance class once a week, which was possible because my car-owning neighbor took the class with me, as the buses did not run late in my area.

A word about public transit in Brittany: it is quite limited, and most people rely on cars for their daily life. Two bullet trains run in parallel from Paris to the western end of Brittany—one along the northern coast (terminating in the city of Brest), and the other along the southern coast (terminating in Kemper), and there is a local train connecting the two terminuses. Traveling from one city to another along either of those Paris-Brittany routes is quite easy and convenient; traveling anywhere else is time-consuming and often rather difficult. Limited regional bus service fills in some of the

north-south gaps, but not enough to get one everywhere in Brittany. If one lives in a metropolitan area, as I did, one can take advantage of the local bus system as well. However, the buses tend to have rather limited or no coverage to suburban areas in the evening and on Sundays, and if one lives as far out on a bus line as I did, it may be difficult to travel at all during off-peak hours.

If I had picked an isolated area in which to spend my year in Brittany, it was also a picturesque one, filled with incredible beauty and a great deal of history. I lived on the border of two villages, Ar Gerveur and Kerroc'h, in a small apartment that had been carved out of an old farmhouse and converted into a vacation rental. A ten-minute walk south and west of my apartment, there were white sand beaches, as well as walking trails that wound along the coastline. In fact, the entire coast was a scenic mix of rocky outcroppings and sandy beaches all along the coast of the commune of Plañvour and neighboring An Arvor. The area, while now primarily functioning as a suburb of An Oriant, still has some farms and traditional houses mixed in among the newer houses. In addition, within walking distance of my apartment, I was able to explore ancient megaliths, a holy well, old public washing areas, and WWII bunkers.

Weekends tended to be quiet, especially at first. I might go into An Oriant to sightsee, shop, or eat at a restaurant on a Saturday (sushi! Indian food!), and on Sunday ride my bicycle to the Plañvour farmers' market or along the coast to take pictures of the sunset or a nearby megalith. Occasionally, when I needed to stock up on some exotic basics, like jello or peanut butter or Asian cooking ingredients, my local friend would drive me to a specialty store in An Orient or Lann ar Ster. Later on, I got out a bit more, as my classmates invited me out to *festoù noz* and to go sightseeing around Brittany. After a while, I also got to know some folks in the area, via my local friend, and they included me in their events and parties. In addition, one of my neighbors befriended me—an older couple who were native Breton speakers, and we

would occasionally visit and talk about Breton.

The course was punctuated by one- and two-week vacations, and those were the moments when I had the freedom to engage in some intensive sight-seeing (via rental car), entertain visitors from back home, or head off to Paris for a change of pace. I also spent five weeks in town after the program ended to conduct research interviews, explore the area a bit more, and hang out with my former classmates and their families. This time at the end also allowed me to decompress, use my Breton language skills, and say goodbye to all of the people I had gotten to know over my nine months in Brittany.

Resources

Links to all of the schools that offer six-month immersion courses, as well as two programs for those who plan to teach in Catholic bilingual schools or Diwan:

http://www.fr.opab-oplb.org/13-formation.htm

To search for housing in Brittany:
http://www.leboncoin.fr/annonces/offres/bretagne/

Y DYN YN Y CWCH

Kasey LaGrange

Roedd Elen, Tom, a Jayne yn llawn cyffro. Roedd y dosbarth Cymraeg yn mynd ar fordaith aduniad. Doedd Matthew ddim yn llawn cyffro. Meddyliodd e fod llongau yn dwp. Roedd y lleill yn cael hwyl, ond cwynodd Matthew am bopeth. Cythruddodd e'r criw, y teithwyr, a Jayne, Tom, ac Elen yn arbennig. Roedd e'n anghwrtais a chas hefyd. Un diwrnod, trawodd y llong riff cwrel. Dechreuodd y llong suddo.

"Beth wnawn ni?" meddai Elen.

"Taflwch y plant dros yr ochr!" meddai Matthew. "Mae'n gas gen i blant a gallen ni hwylio yn ôl i Gymru pe byddai'r llong yn fwy ysgafn. Dydy'r twll ddim ymhell o dan y dŵr. Dyn ni angen llai o bwysau." Doedd y rhieni ddim yn hapus am hynny, a doedd neb yn ei hoffi fe. Felly, rhoion nhw Matthew dros yr ochr a'i osod mewn cwch bach. Dydyn nhw ddim yn anghenfilod. Hwyliodd y llong yn ôl i Gyrmu, a gwyliodd Matthew y llong yn mynd allan o'r olwg. "Bydda i'n marw yma," meddai Matthew, ond wedyn gwelodd e long môr-leidr ar y gorwel...

Casglodd y môr-ladron Matthew o'r cwch. Roedd y capten yn mynd i ladd Matthew oni bai fod trysor 'da fe. Ond cyginiodd Matthew i drefnu'r llong. "Da iawn," meddai'r capten. "Gallwn ni dy ladd di yn y bore." Wedyn, roedd Matthew mor ofnadwy fel eu bod nhw wedi gwneud brenin y môr-ladron ohono fe. Hwyliodd y llong yn ôl i Gymru er mwyn rhyng-gipio'r llong fordaith. Ond doedd y llong arall ddim wedi dychwelyd eto. "Mae Elen yn caru'r Gymraeg," meddai Matthew. "Dw i'n gallu ymosod ar Loegr a dw i'n gallu rhyddhau Cymru! Wedyn bydd hi'n fy ngharu i!" Arestiwyd Matthew a'r môr-ladron gan yr heddlu. "Pwy fyddai'n ceisio gorchfygu Lloegr gyda un galiwn? Yr unfed ganrif ar hugain yw hi." Ymwelodd Tom, Jayne ac Elen â Matthew yn y carchar. "Pam ceisiest ti orchfygu Lloegr?" gofynodd Elen. "O achos fy mod i'n dy garu di!" meddai Matthew. "Mae hyn yn rhyfedd." meddai Elen. Gadawodd Elen, Jayne, a Tom. Criodd Matthew, wedyn ymunodd e â gang carchar. Arhosodd e. A chynllwyniodd e...

Roedd Matthew yn drist iawn, nawr. Matthew oedd arweinydd Y Carcharorion. Y Carcharorion oedd ei gang carchar. Ond allai fe ddim bod yn hapus heb Elen, a gwrthododd hi fe. Felly cynllwyniodd Mathew drwy'r dydd, bob dydd. "Bydda i'n cael dial!" meddai Matthew. Hoffodd y carcharorion eraill mo Matthew. Roedd e'n dweud pethau rhyfedd fel 'na drwy'r amser. Wedyn, defnyddiodd e lwy i balu ei ffordd allan o'r carchar. Aeth Matthew mewn cwch wedi ei wneud allan o siacedi glaw i weld Elen. Roedd y siwrnai'n beryglus iawn. Tarodd e dri phlentyn a suddo pedair llong a cuchiodd e ar enfys ar y ffordd achos ei fod e'n casáu plant, a llongau, a llawenydd. Pan gyrhaeddodd yno, taflodd e wyau ar ei thŷ. "Bydd yr wyau 'ma yn ei dysgu hi," meddai Matthew. Cafodd bapur tŷ bach o'i fag hefyd. Roedd e'n dechrau taflu'r papur ond daeth yr heddlu. "Rhowch i lawr y papur!" gweiddodd yr heddlu. "Fydda i ddim!" gweiddodd Matthew. Saethodd yr heddlu Matthew. Bu farw Matthew, ond erlyniodd Tom yr heddlu ac aeth e'n gyfoethog.

The Man in the Boat

Kasey LaGrange

Elen, Tom, and Jayne were full of excitement. The Welsh class was going on a reunion cruise. Matthew was not full of excitement. He thought that ships were stupid. The others were having fun, but Matthew complained about everything. He annoyed the crew, the travelers, and Jayne, Tom, and Elen especially. He was rude and nasty also. One day, the ship hit a coral reef. The ship began to sink.

"What will we do?" said Elen.

"Throw the children over the side!" said Matthew. "I hate children and we can sail back to Wales if the ship was lighter. The hole isn't far under the water. We need less weight." The parents weren't happy about that, and nobody liked him. So they put Matthew over the side and set him in a small boat. They weren't monsters. The ship sailed back to Wales and Matthew watched the ship go out of view. "I'm going to die here." thought Matthew, but then he saw a pirate ship on the horizon...

The pirates collected Matthew from the boat. The captain was going

to kill Matthew unless he had treasure. But Matthew offered to organize the ship. "Very well," said the captain. "I can kill you in the morning." Later, Matthew was so horrible that they had made him king of the pirates. The ship sailed back to Wales in order to intercept the cruise ship. But the other ship hadn't returned yet.

"Elen loves Welsh," thought Matthew. "I can attack England and I can free Wales! Then she'll love me!" Matthew and the pirates got arrested by the police. "Who would try to conquer England with one galleon? It's the 21st century."

Tom, Jayne, and Elen visited Matthew in the jail. "Why did you try to conquer England?" asked Elen.

"Because I love you!" said Matthew.

"That's weird" said Elen. Elen, Tom, and Jayne left. Matthew cried, and then he joined a prison gang. He waited. And he plotted…

Matthew was very sad now. Matthew was the leader of The Prisoners. The Prisoners was his prison gang. But he could not be happy without Elen, and she rejected him. So Matthew plotted all day, every day. "I'm going to get revenge!" thought Matthew. The other prisoners didn't like Matthew. He said strange things like that all the time. Then, he used his spoon to dig out of the jail. Matthew went in a boat that he had made out of rain jackets to see Elen. The journey was very dangerous. He hit three children and sank four ships and he scowled at rainbows on the way because he hated children and ships and joy. When he arrived there, he threw eggs at her house. "These eggs will teach her," thought Matthew. He got toilet paper out of his bag also. He began to throw the paper, but the police came. "Put down the paper!" shouted the police. "I won't!" shouted Matthew. The police shot Matthew. Matthew died, but Tom sued the police and became rich.

Editor's note: Ceri Eagling of Brooklyn, NY writing under the penname Aderyn bach ('Little bord') won the 2013 Eisteddfod at the intensive Welsh language course sponsored by Cymdeithas Madog (The Welsh Studies Institute in North America). The topic for this competition was "Y Gwynt" ('The Wind'). Ceri also supplied an English translation of her winning text upon request from the JCLL editors for publication here.

Y GWYNT

Ceri Eagling (Aderyn bach)

Roedd fy mam-gu'n casái'r gwynt fel rheol. Y gwynt oedd ei gelyn pan oedd hi'n cerdded i'r dref neu i'r capel, weithiau'n ceisio tynnu ei het oddi ar ei phen, ac yn ffeindio eu ffordd tu fewn i'w choler ac i lawr ei gwddf fel bysedd oer. Roedd y gwynt yn peri papurau brwnt i ddawnsio at Nan o'r pafin. Ych-a-fi!

Dim ond ar ddydd Llun, diwrnod golchi, y byddai'r gwynt yn dod yn ffrind iddi hi. Fel perchynnog melin wynt yn yr Iseldiroedd yn y dyddiau gynt, neu fel morwyr cyn dyfodiad yr Oes Stêm, roedd Nan wrth ei bodd yn edrych trwy'r ffenest fore Llun a gweld bod y gwynt yn chwythu'n iawn.

Roedd gyda ni ddwy lein ddillad, un uwchben y llall. I lenwi'r lein uchaf, roedd rhaid ini agor rhan ohoni a oedd wedi cael ei chlymu i'r postyn tal, a'i gollwng i lefel y lein isaf. Gwaith caled oedd hi wedyn i'w chodi'n llawn o bethau gwlyb a thrwm. Roedd yn wir fel codi hwyl. Unwaith y byddai'r lein honno i fyny eto, gallen ni lenwi'r lein isaf yn rhwydd. Wrth gwrs, doedd neb ond Nan yn gwybod y ffordd hollol gywir o hongian dillad a chynfasau.

Roedd y gweddill ohonon ni'n dueddol o fod yn weddol dwp o ran y manyli-on mân. Roedd rhaid iddi'n aml fynd tu fas ar ein hôl i ail-begio crys wrth ei gwt a'i droi i roi cyfle iawn i'r gwynt i enchwythu ei freichiau.

Roedd fy mam yn darllen stori i mi gan Aesop fel plentyn, sydd yn dis-grifio cystadleuaeth rhwng yr haul a'r gwynt. Mae dyn yn cerdded fyny allt, ac mae'r ddau gystadleuwr yn ymdrechi i'w orfodi i dynnu ei got. Y gwynt yw'r cyntaf i drio ac mae'n gwneud ei orau glas, ond fel fy Mamgu, mae'r dyn yn botymu ei got yn rhy dynn. Yr haul, wrth achosi iddo chwysu, sydd y llwyddi-annus. Wel, nid oedd y gystadleuaeth a welon ni rhwng y gwynt a'r haul yn arferol, ond rhwng y gwynt a'r glaw. Os oedd y gwynt yn gryfach, ar y lein âi'r dillad, ond wrth gwrs, gallai'r waedd, "Glaw eto!" godi unryw funud. Wrth ei chlywed, byddai pawb yn y tŷ a hyd yn oed Mrs. Long, ein cymydoges drws nesa weithiau yn rhedeg i achub y golch ar frys. Os nad oedd y gwynt yn gallu goresgyn y glaw, druan ohonon ni, roedd dillad ar draws y gegin drwy'r dydd. Ych-a-fi!

The Wind

Ceri Eagling (Aderyn bach)

My grandmother hated the wind as a rule. The wind was her enemy when she was walking to town or to chapel, sometimes trying to pull her hat off her head, and finding its way under her collar and down her neck like cold fingers. The wind made dirty papers dance at Nan from the sidewalk. Ugh!

Only on Mondays, washing day, did the wind become her friend. Like a windmill owner in The Netherlands in bygone days, or like sailors before the age of steam, Nan was in her element on Monday mornings, looking through the window and seeing the wind blowing well.

We had two washing lines, one above the other. To fill the top line we had to undo the part that was tied to the tall line post, and lower it to the level of the bottom line. Afterwards, it was hard work raising it full of heavy, wet things. It really was like hoisting a sail. Once that line was up again, it was easy to fill the bottom line. Of course, no one but Nan knew the completely correct way to hang clothes and bed sheets. The rest of us tended to be a bit dull-witted concerning the finer details. She often had to go out after us and re-pin a shirt by its tail and turn it to give the wind a chance to inflate its

sleeves.

My mother read me a story by Aesop when I was a child, which described a contest between the sun and the wind. A man is walking up a hill and the two competitors struggle to force him to take off his coat. The wind is the first to try, and he does his level best, but like my grandmother, the man buttons his coat too tightly. The sun, by causing him to sweat, is successful. Well, the contest we usually saw was not between the sun and the wind, but between the wind and the rain. If the wind was stronger, on the line would go the clothes, but of course, the shout, "Rain again!" could go up at any minute. On hearing it, everyone in the house, and even our next-door neighbor Mrs. Long sometimes, would run to rescue the wash. If the wind was unable to overcome the rain, poor us, there would be clothes all over the kitchen throughout the day. Ugh!

REVIEW

GAEILGE GAN STRÓ! BEGINNERS LEVEL.
A multimedia Irish language course for adults

Dublin. Gaelchultúr. 211 pages. ISBN: 978-0-9563614-4-8 €34.95
Éamonn Ó Dónaill, 2011

GAEILGE GAN STRÓ! LOWER INTERMEDIATE LEVEL.
A multimedia Irish language course for adults

Dublin. Gaelchultúr. 355 pages. ISBN: 978-0-9563614-1-7 €34.95
Éamonn Ó Dónaill, 2010

Reviewed by Hilary Mhic Suibhne, New York University.

   Gaeilge Gan Stró! – Beginners Level and *Gaeilge Gan Stró! – Lower Intermediate Level* are described as multimedia courses for adult learners of Irish. The courses are each composed of a book and four CDs. The CDs contain recordings of all the dialogues in the books and also revision exercises. The courses may be supplemented by enrolling in an online module provided by the publisher for an additional time-based fee, currently €45.00/ 3 months, €80.00/6 months and €149.00/12 months. Unit 1 of the online module in each level is available free of charge at www.ranganna.com

   Beginners Level is aimed both at learners who have never studied the Irish language before and also at those who have very rudimentary skills in Irish. The course is designed for learners working alone and is focused on developing listening comprehension and speaking skills along with basic

reading and writing competency. *Lower Intermediate Level* is aimed at learners who have already acquired basic competency in spoken Irish and wish to progress to a higher level, and includes in its target market those schooled in Ireland who would like to revisit the language and become proficient speakers. Both courses are suitable for use in an adult education classroom.

The courses are designed around the vocabulary and phraseology required for basic communication on a variety of everyday topics of conversation. Grammar is taught as the need arises within the communication exercises in each chapter. There are fifteen chapters, called units, in *Beginners Level* each of which represents a topic, for example: Meeting People, Food and Drink, Clothes and Shopping, Health Matters, Holidays and Travel. There are also fifteen units in *Lower Intermediate Level*, some mirroring those in *Beginners Level*, such as: An Teaghlach, (The Family); Bia agus Deoch, (Food and Drink); Coinní agus Socruithe, (Appointments and Arrangements), however *Lower Intermediate Level* offers a much deeper treatment of each topic with additional vocabulary and more extensive application of vocabulary in the Useful Phrases section of each unit.

Each unit in the books is designed to follow a pattern. The introduction clearly defines the objectives of the unit. New sounds and new vocabulary are identified first, followed by exercises, repetitions, useful phrases and dialogues. Every unit rounds off with a section called Talking Heads; this is composed of transcripts from recorded segments of people speaking at a normal pace; the recordings may be accessed on the CD. Learners are encouraged to remain working on one unit until proficient enough to both understand Talking Heads and complete the end of unit revision exercises. Answers to exercises are included at the back of *Beginners Level* and following each unit in *Lower Intermediate Level*. Both are attractively designed large format 10 x 8 inch (25 x 20 cms) books, clearly laid out and agreeably illustrated throughout with stock color photography.

A longtime proponent of the Communicative Approach to language learning, Éamonn Ó Dónaill has in these, his most recent books, targeted the growing number of adult learners of Irish, many of whom are located outside Ireland. Until relatively recently adult learners of Irish, who often study alone, were lacking suitable support materials to commence their language journey. Publications directed toward adult learners are either outdated now, for example *Buntús Cainte* (1967), *Linguaphone Gael-Linn* (1974), or focus on one particular dialect of Irish, for example *Learning Irish* (1980), Micheál Ó Siadhail, and *Irish On Your Own!* (1995) Éamonn Ó Dónaill. Another contemporary publication for adult learners, *Speaking Irish* (2008) Siuán Ní Mhaonaigh and Antain Mac Lochlainn is suitable for advanced learners only. The majority of books available to beginners of any age have been children's schoolbooks published in Ireland. What is clear however is that courses which teach Irish as a second language to adults must provide them with the tools to communicate about topics that make sense within their own environment; children's schoolbooks simply don't do the job.

The *Gaeilge Gan Stró!* collection employs the basic principles and procedures of the communicative and audio-lingual methods for teaching a second language. Each unit is goal oriented; the learner then embarks on strategies and activities which are clearly designed to reach the specified goal. The topics are carefully selected to represent examples of what people might discuss from day to day. The approach relies on the learner's active involvement in conversation and repetition when necessary; the dialogue examples given in these courses are realistic and relatively engaging. One of the strengths of these two courses is the variety of accents that one hears on the CDs. In the past there was much focus on the difficulties caused by different accents and dialects for learners; here however the learner encounters different accents all the time with no ado and one hears standard Irish for the most part on the CDs, this is a great aid to instructors using these courses in the classroom

environment. Hearing speakers of differing ages and with slightly different accents is an important element in successfully learning to comprehend a language and eventually speak it comfortably. While grammar is not emphasized, basic grammatical rules are explained throughout and it is the literary standard form of Irish that is taught.[1]

While *Gaeilge Gan Stró! Beginners Level* is certainly a course that can be successfully undertaken by the lone learner, the greater complexity of information in *Gaeilge Gan Stró! Lower Intermediate Level* may make it a more difficult choice for the intermediate student working alone. The Read On section toward the end of each unit is particular challenging for lower intermediate students and, although accompanied by a translation, it still frequently requires input from an instructor to make it a useful exercise rather than a discouraging one for the student. *Gaeilge Gan Stró! Lower Intermediate Level* is perfect for a group learning setting where real conversation may be practiced and grammar applications discussed, it is also very suitable for formal adult language classes where nuance and subtleties in the language can also be explained.

The actual success of these two courses, and indeed any language course, rests with individual motivation but this collection is contemporary and enjoyable and will have widespread appeal, not only due to its straightforward and approachable design but because it is directed toward involving the adult learner in realistic conversations which is key to successful language acquisition.

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1 A companion grammar book, *Gramadach gan Stró!* Gaelchultúr (2013) is available by the same author and is suitable for students who have completed, or are close to completing *Gaeilge gan Stró! Lower Intermediate Level.*