

**6th Annual Conference of the North American
Association for Celtic Language Teachers**

The Information Age, Celtic Languages and the New Millenium

Editors

Richard F. E. Sutcliffe

Gearóid Ó Néill

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Department of Computer Science
and Information Systems
University of Limerick
Limerick, Ireland

Gemma.Ryan@ul.ie Email
+353 61 202783 Tel
+353 61 202734 Fax
www.csis.ul.ie URL

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Preface

Celtic languages form a branch of the Indo-European family and include Breton, Cornish, Irish, Manx, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh.

The North American Association for Celtic Language Teachers exists to permit instructors to exchange ideas and research through meetings and an annual publication, to increase links of Celtic language teachers with those of other languages and other umbrella organizations, and to increase opportunities for Celtic language teachers.

NAACLTL has held a highly successful annual conference in North America since 1995. Previous events took place in Glendale Community College, California, University of Pennsylvania, St. Francis Xavier University, University of Minnesota and University of Ottawa. This year the conference comes to Europe for the first time, presenting an ideal opportunity for Celtic language speakers, teachers and related researchers in the US to renew their links with colleagues in European areas such as Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland and Wales.

This volume contains the papers presented at NAACLTL2000. They include reports regarding new techniques for teaching, descriptions of recently developed electronic resources and discussions of strategic and planning issues. All the Celtic languages are represented as are many current trends in language teaching and related research. We hope you find these papers interesting and a source of ideas for your own work.

Finally, we would like to express our thanks to Bord na Gaeilge and University of Limerick for sponsoring the conference and to Pat Cox MEP who has kindly agreed to perform the official opening.

Richard F. E. Sutcliffe
Gearóid Ó Néill

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Caoimhín Ó Donnaile, University of the Highlands and Islands

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Gaelic and Computing: What is Happening and What Needs Doing – A Personal View

Caoimhín Ó Donnaíle

Sabhal Mór Ostaig
An t-Eilean Sgitheanach
Scotland
IV44 8RQ, UK

caoimhin@smo.uhi.ac.uk Email
<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~caoimhin/> URL
+44 1471 888000 Tel
+44 1471 888001 Fax

Abstract

This paper discusses the current health of Scottish Gaelic; the growth of Sabhal Mór Ostaig over the past ten years, the mix of students, new opportunities via the University of the Highlands and Islands project, the computing facilities and projects currently underway there. It describes the need for a Gaelic lexical database as a foundation for spell checking, the possibility of a Celtic cognates database, and the aim of Tobar an Dualchais to preserve for posterity 18,000 hours of spoken Gaelic archives.

Introduction

I am going to attempt in this paper to take a wide-ranging view. However, I am very conscious of the fact that no one person can know any more than part of it in any depth – hence the word "personal" in the title. What I'll do is to take a quick tour of topics which I am familiar with and which I think will be of interest to attendees of the conference: a quick look at the "health" of Scottish Gaelic; developments at Sabhal Mór Ostaig; the University of the Highlands and Islands project; and then turning to computing and the Internet.

Although I am of Irish extraction and started learning Irish Gaelic before Scottish Gaelic, I have for the past nine years been working at Sabhal Mór Ostaig, the Gaelic-medium further education college, or "community college" as you would say in America, on the island of Skye. I teach computing full-time, and have quite a few other hats besides – webmaster of an extensive web-site, and head of information technology.

Scottish Gaelic – Decline or Revival?

Is Scottish Gaelic in decline as some say, or is there a revival as others say? The answer is that there is a great decline and also a great revival, both happening rather quickly at the same time, and the next five to ten years will be critical as to whether Gaelic ultimately survives as a community language and how much of its riches are preserved.

I'll use Sleat, where I live and work in the south of Skye, as an illustration. The decline started earlier here than in the western isles. There is also very strong pressure from incomers and population increase. But on the other hand, Sleat has benefited in recent years first from

the support of Sir Iain Noble, the pro-Gaelic landowner, and latterly from the development and growth of his brainchild, Sabhal Mór Ostaig.

Anyone native to Sleat and over the age of about 50 speaks excellent Gaelic. My guess is that that is a reflection of the date when Gaelic stopped being the language of the school playground. Often the age cutoff can be seen within children of a single family. People in the generation after that can understand Gaelic but generally aren't comfortable speaking it. People in their twenties are generally interested in Gaelic but can't understand it.

After that the benefits of the revival and the setting up of a Gaelic medium unit in the local primary school [1] start to be seen. A few of the teenagers are fluent and comfortable speaking Gaelic, although without the richness of expression of the older generation. After that the numbers increase. Families raising children with Gaelic are finding that instead of the children turning to English when they reach school-age, as used to happen, the neighbours' children are turning to speaking Gaelic. The children are proud to be able to speak Gaelic as well as English. I know of several examples of young children who came to the area knowing no Gaelic and within a year are chatting to their friends outside school in Gaelic. Gaelic-medium education has been very successful in Sleat, as elsewhere in Scotland. Studies show that the children do well in all subjects. The Gaelic unit in Sleat now has a higher intake than the English unit, and I am told that the children in the Gaelic unit are ahead even in their English reading.

The numbers are small, though [2] – much smaller than the numbers in Gaelic-medium education in Ireland, and are not nearly enough to match the number of older Gaelic speakers who are dying off. Only recently did the first all-Gaelic primary school open in Glasgow. There is still no such thing as a Gaelic-medium unit in a secondary school (or "high school") – only a few subjects taught in a few schools [3]. A report by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools seven years ago stated that secondary schooling through Gaelic was "neither feasible nor desirable" – due to lack of resources.

Some steps have been taken in recent years to begin to remedy this lack of resources. The Scottish Education Department has set up the "Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig", based in Lewis, to commission materials for use in Gaelic medium teaching. For example, it has just produced "Dòigh eile air a Ràdh", a small Gaelic thesaurus for use in primary schools.

The "Stòrdàta Fiosrachaidh Gàidhlig" (Gaelic Resources Database) [4] produced and maintained by the Education Department of Comhairle nan Eilean [5] has for several years now been available on WWW. It is a database listing the title, location and other information on anything which might be of use to teachers – books, articles in journals, songs in books, cassettes and CDs. It is something which could usefully be imitated for other Celtic languages.

Sabhal Mór Ostaig

Sabhal Mór Ostaig is one of the highlights of the Gaelic revival [6]. When I joined the college in 1991 there were only 18 students. The only building was a renovated farm building built in 1810 [7]. A van took the students home after classes each day and the college was dead after 5pm. Other than the full-time courses – business studies through the medium of

Gaelic – the "Stòrdàta Briathrachais" (Gaelic terminology database), and the summer short courses, there was nothing much else happening.

A new building was added in 1993, tripling the size of the college and providing residential accommodation for the first time, so that the students were not scattered far and wide and had access to computing and library facilities in the evenings [8]. The commercial offshoot of the college, Cànan, was started, producing Gaelic educational materials and subtitles for TV programmes [9]. The Lèirsinn research unit was started. A Gaelic Television course started.

The Arainn Chaluim Chille campus was added in 1998-99, again tripling the size of the college [10]. The college is now home to a whole host of activities and offshoot units – The Tosg Gaelic Theatre company; Iomairt Chaluim Chille which unites Gaels in Scotland and Ireland both North and South [11]; Tobar an Dualchais [12]; European projects such as Digital Democracy [13] and Titan [14]. The number of full time staff stands at about 50, and the college is the major employer in the south of Skye.

The number of full-time students has remained at about 70 for the last two years – something which we hope to remedy. The quality is excellent. There is a very healthy mix of ages, origins and backgrounds. Starting first with students from abroad, we have at the moment three students from the US, three from Cape Breton, one from Russia, and one from Denmark. All of them have very fluent Gaelic. We have a student from Wales who is fluent in Welsh and a student from Gaoth Dobhair who is fluent in Irish Gaelic. We have students from England and from all over Scotland. However, a large proportion of the students, as you would expect, come from the Gaelic speaking western isles. In the last few years, for the first time, we have quite a number of students from local Gaelic-speaking families in Sleat, as well as from farther afield in Skye – a sign of the confidence the local Gaelic-speaking community has in the college.

Students who already have degrees and who want to improve their Gaelic, mature students with a wide range of skills and experience, even a few retirees, mix with 17-year old school leavers from the islands who want to get some qualifications. This produces a mixture which is good for all concerned.

Since all the teaching at SMO is through Gaelic, a basic level of conversational ability in Gaelic is necessary before a student can begin study at the college. One way of obtaining this is by attending summer short courses at SMO [15]. Another is by attending the NC level courses offered elsewhere in the University of the Highlands and Islands partnership, for example at Inverness College. Another method will open up shortly since the college is currently developing an intensive 16-hour per week "Access Course", for delivery by distance learning, designed to bring complete beginners up to SMO entrance level within a year [16]. This will start as a pilot project this September. The intention was focus this on local centres round Scotland, with a few hours per week contact with local tutors being used to supplement distance-learning materials. However, it is becoming clear that there is a demand from students outside Scotland too for a course like this. This may be possible in the future, since the intention is to place some of the course materials on WWW, and to provide Email support facilities and so on.

The computing facilities at Sabhal Mór Ostaig are now excellent. The college has always been advanced for its size in the use of ICT facilities. We had Internet Email – "smo.ac.uk" in use by dialup in 1991 – possibly the first Further Education college in Britain. We had an intranet running in 1992. We had a WWW server running internally in August 1993. In December 1993 got a permanent 64 kbit/s connection to the Internet, thanks to the University of the Highlands and Islands project, and we became "smo.uhi.ac.uk". Last November we got a 700-fold boost in speed to 45 Mbit/s. There is a switched network delivering 100 Mbit/s to the desktop on structured wiring throughout the college. The college is well equipped with fast new workstations, Novell servers from the UHI project and Unix servers of our own. The television course is now doing a lot of multimedia work on computer workstations.

We have an extensive website with many thousands of pages [6]. Despite this being nearly all in Gaelic, it is currently getting about 22,000 requests per day in raw terms, although the number of actual clicks per day by users outside the college would be more like 10,000. We have in the past hosted websites and domains for other organisations and are happy to continue doing this on a voluntary basis for Gaelic organisations. The college recently won a bid to provide WWW engineering services to the entire UHI network, and we are involved in a collaborative project to translate the Opera WWW browser into various languages including Gaelic.

The University of the Highlands and Islands Project

Up to about five or six years ago, the UHI project [17] was mostly talk. However, it is now a reality, uniting about 14 colleges and institutes over a huge area into a partnership with is gathering strength each year. Sabhal Mór Ostaig played a significant part in winning people over to the UHI idea, since the college has always been very advanced for its size. In turn, we have benefited greatly in equipment, new buildings, and new course opportunities.

UHI is not yet a university – this will require several more years of development. However, it is already able to offer degree courses if these are validated and approved by other bodies, such as the UK's Open University. Within the next few months, all being well, about eight students will graduate at SMO with a BA degree, some with "BA Gaelic Language and Culture" [18], others with "BA Gaelic with North Atlantic Studies" [19]. They will have completed all three years of study entirely at SMO, so it will be a historic event. The college also has several research students attached to it, undertaking PhD's under the University of the Highlands and Islands project and supervised by SMO staff.

UHI degrees have a modular structure, which allows a great deal of flexibility in developing courses. Students can leave after a year with a certificate, and return later for a second or third year to obtain a higher level diploma or a full degree, or they can, for example begin their study with a year at Inverness College and continue it at SMO. Increasingly, individual modules will be delivered by different colleges, using networked delivery.

The University of the Highlands and Islands project, although we call it in Gaelic "Oilthigh na Gaidhealtachd", is not itself a particularly Gaelic institution. Within the UHI framework, however, there is an increasing amount of cooperation between Gaelic teaching staff at centres such as Lews Castle College in Stornoway, SMO, and Inverness College. There is an increasing emphasis on "outreach centres", generally with ISDN links. Lews Castle College has established outreach centres in Barra, South Uist, Benbecula and Ness. Sabhal Mór

Ostaig is developing a new centre, "Ionad Chalum Chille" on the island of Islay. A new NC course in Gaelic Language and Music is about to begin in Benbecula College in September.

The UHI project, as well as having a fast communications network between the colleges, has a network of video-conferencing centres which now utilise this wide-area network. These are very heavily used, with the video-conferencing bridge in Inverness being the most heavily used bridge in the UK academic world. Seminars in Gaelic are delivered very effectively with the active participation of an audience in several centres. So far, video-conferencing has been used less extensively for general teaching, due mainly to difficulties in scheduling with any regularity classes and video-conferencing facilities in different centres. However, its use is increasing, and the imminent introduction of computer-based video-conferencing over IP will offer new possibilities, as will improved scheduling and booking facilities.

Computing and the Internet

The Internet is a truly marvelous resource. It is a godsend to minority languages because it cuts out the cost of printing and distribution. One of the best ways which language agencies can promote the language is to get more materials such as dictionaries made freely available on the Internet, buying up the copyright if necessary.

Copyright is a problem. In my opinion, the duration of copyright – 70 years after the death of the author – is totally ridiculous. But we have to live with it. The recent extension from 50 years to 70 years poses interesting problems. To take Dwelly's dictionary, for example, Edward Dwelly died in 1939, about 60 years ago. However, according to my reading of the copyright law pages, his famous dictionary is certainly out of copyright in the US, if not also in Europe, because once a work is out of copyright it cannot in any circumstances go back into copyright. Of course, apart from the law of copyright there are also rules of etiquette, and other people's work should not simply be plagiarised without acknowledgment.

There is a need to simply get on with typing in out-of-copyright materials – and typing is still often the best method despite the advent of optical character recognition. I would like to see Gaelic funding bodies provide funds for such work, perhaps as part-time work for students. We need something akin to Ciarán Ó Duibhín's million word "Galdict" for all the Celtic languages, not just Donegal Gaelic!

There is a great need for online dictionaries. The "Stòrdàta Briathrachais" [20], the Gaelic terminology database developed at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig since the late 1980s, and with now over 100,000 entries, has been tremendously popular and it is certainly our intention to continue expanding and developing it. The WWW interface [21] has been very popular, and I know that many people outside SMO have it permanently open on their computers as they write. I believe that the WWW interface to the Foclóir Beag [22] developed by University of Limerick is similarly popular. There is a need for a "Stòrdàta Briathrachais" for Irish Gaelic and a "Fócloir Beag" for Scottish Gaelic.

It would be tremendously useful to have a dictionary-lookup facility available on WWW browsers – so that you could click on any Gaelic word, without any need for special markup on the page, the browser would be programmed to detect the word under the cursor, lemmatise it and set another window to point to the appropriate place in a Gaelic-English dictionary. This would make Gaelic-language pages, available to a wider audience without

the need to provide English versions of every single page. I feel that a facility like this ought to be do-able by now using Javascript or some such, but I don't know enough to know how.

It is ridiculous that there is no spell-checker yet for Scottish or Irish Gaelic. This is one of the most useful facilities to learners which computers could provide, and it is not difficult to produce. I had very-useful Gaelic spell-checking going on Edinburgh University computers in 1988, and we had primitive but popular Gaelic spell-checking in WordPerfect at Sabhal Mór Ostaig in 1992. You can feed a list of Gaelic words – wordforms rather than just dictionary headwords – into just about any spellchecker in place of the English words, and you get an acceptable Gaelic spellchecker. The reason we have never got round to doing it at SMO is that we moved to MS-Word, and MS-Word, unlike WordPerfect, did not allow the user to replace the English lexicon by one of their own. Perhaps there are ways round this by now.

We need not just one spell-checker but lots of them! We need spell-checking in word-processors, Web authoring tools, Email, and optical character recognition. We need spell-checking according to strict "GOC" rules for schools and we need spell-checking according to different rules for optical character recognition of out-of-copyright materials. We need spell checking for both advanced users and primary school-children.

To support all this – the generation of different wordform lists for different purposes and the addition of new terms over time – we need a lexical database. I am thinking of the kind of relational database which Ken George describes for Cornish in his paper, or the Celex database developed in the Netherlands for Dutch, German and English in the 1980s. There would be two main tables – a table of dictionary "headwords" and a table of wordforms, with the wordforms being linked back to their headwords. Frequency data from a corpus of texts would be an important field – a lesson from the Celex database. A corpus of Gaelic texts would provide a crosscheck that the wordforms in the lexical database were correct, that they were being properly generated by rule from the headwords. In turn the lexical database would help to spellcheck and standardise the texts in the corpus – the kind of iterative process which Ken George describes. A lot of the work can be done these days with tools such as Excel, without the need for much special programming.

In these days of multimedia programming, the pronunciation information would be available for each word as a soundbite. We currently have all the headwords from Macfarlane's dictionary recorded into soundfiles at SMO and hope to edit these soon and make them available on WWW as a "speaking dictionary". The intention is to do the same for various dialects.

Cutting across the Celtic languages now, we have recently started work at SMO on an experimental basis on a "Celtic Cognates" relational database [23]. So this going beyond the idea expressed by Phil Kelly in his paper of a "Triglot Gaelic database". We currently have about 1000 records, although most of these only have field entries for a few languages. It links with Macfarlane's and MacBain's dictionaries, in database format. Linking these with an Irish Gaelic dictionary and applying some simple rules such as "change all Scottish Gaelic graves to acutes", and "change 'sg' in Scottish Gaelic to 'sc' in Irish Gaelic", would immediately give several thousand new "Celtic cognates".

The Celtic cognates database has several possible uses. It might, as Phil Kelly suggests, serve as the basis of a "translation" facility among the Q-Celtic languages. It should be useful to speakers of one Celtic language who are learning another. It provides a means of translating into other Celtic languages lists of Gaelic-English cognates which are so useful to the learner, like those which are used to such good effect in the George McLennan's little book, "Scots Gaelic: a brief introduction". When linked to speaking dictionaries in different languages, it frees etymological study from the bounds of differing spelling conventions. There are many questions, though, which need answering. One question is whether it would be better to have separate triglot Q-Celtic database and P-Celtic databases, which could be quite strict in their matching of words and parts of speech, and which could then be linked together using a looser matching.

Projects such as this are ideally suited to cooperation between different institutes. Not only can files be easily passed from site to site over the Internet, and web pages linked together, but databases in different sites, if they act as SQL servers, can be combined into a single distributed database. We aim to develop work like this at Sabhal Mór Ostaig, particularly since it fits in well with our remit to provide WWW engineering services for UHI. As Delyth Prys and Menna Morgan point out in their paper, the aim should be pool resources and use and reuse information to create new products. Computing is all about sharing and reuse.

A feature of computing over the next few years is going to be the integration of the Unicode character encoding into all computer systems. Unicode is a character encoding which encompasses all of the world's languages and scripts – Polish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese – even Welsh. The other five Celtic languages have been very lucky in that they have been in with the "wealthy" languages; they and all other western European languages except Welsh and are covered by the "Latin-1" character set. Welsh, with its accents on 'w' and 'y', was by mistake, and maybe negligence on the part of the British Standards Institute, omitted completely from the ISO 8859 series of standards when they were first developed. Another benefit of Unicode is that it will make it easy to encode Irish Gaelic texts with the "punc séibhithe". Overall it will lead to a great simplification once it is fully established.

I'll turn now from databases and "linguistic computing" to other materials. There is a demonstrated demand for simple language lessons on the Internet. Our WWW server statistics and messages from users show that our online Gaelic lessons, poor and all as they are, are some of the most popular pages on our website. We hope to improve on them when we put some of the new Access Course materials onto the Internet. Javascript gives scope for interactive pages with exercises for learners and automatic correction – There are some good materials like this available for Irish Gaelic. A bonus would be a login system which would keep track of which lesson a user had reached in their previous session, and which compared their score in tests with what they had achieved previously. Although I have not explored to the full, perhaps the nicest online lessons I have found are those for Breton on the Kervarker site. It would be good if lessons of this quality could be made available for all the Celtic languages.

I said at the beginning of this paper that while there is a great revival taking place in Scottish Gaelic, the older native speakers with the richest Gaelic are dying off. So in the future there will have to be more reliance on archive materials if the riches are not going to be lost. SMO is involved in the Tobar an Dualchais project [12] which aims to preserve 18,000 hours of spoken Gaelic from the archives of the BBC [24] , School of Scottish Studies [25] and

elsewhere, converting it to digital format so that it does not decay; cataloging it and transcribing portions of it while there are still informants who can identify the speakers and the dialects; and making it as widely available as possible so that it can be used for education, in particular in the areas where it was first collected. A foretaste of this can be seen in Proiseact Thiriodh [26].

Conclusion

There is much exciting work to be done in the coming years in bringing the benefits of the computer age to the Celtic languages: developing linguistic tools such as lexical databases; creating interactive online lessons with text and sound; and ultimately the most important of all, making the riches of old archive materials easily accessible to a new generation.

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Bilingual Spoken Dictionary Based on Speech Synthesis in Breton

Nicolas Auclerc*, **Alexandre Bramoullé****, **Francis Favereau***, **Hervé Gourmelon***, **Pierre Lavanant***, **François Louis*****, **Guy Mercier****,
Jacques Siroux**

* Skol Vreizh, 20 rue de Kerscoff, 29600 Morlaix / Montroulez, France

** ENSSAT, laboratoire IRISA / LLI, 6 rue de Kerampont BP 447 22305 Lannion

*** TES 30, hent Brizeug 22015 Sant-Brieg Cedex, France

nicolas.auclerc@wanadoo.fr, abramoul@enssat.fr, francis.favereau@wanadoo.fr,
herve.gourmelon@Thomcast.Thomson-csf.com, lavanant@adsl-nt.tamaris.tm.fr,
flouis@tes.c-si.fr, Guy.mercier@enssat.fr, Jacques.Siroux@enssat.fr

Abstract

In this paper, research activities on Speech Synthesis in Breton and teaching tools based upon speech and software technology are described. The Text-To-Speech synthesis (T.T.S.) system is composed of two main modules: a linguistic processor and an acoustic processor using diphone concatenation; The bilingual (Breton / French) spoken dictionary is composed of indexes allowing the use of various word searching techniques. Pronunciation of words and sentences is obtained through Speech Synthesis. It is possible to type a text within another application, to access the word meaning and to run a spell-check.

Introduction

In 1994, T.E.S. (Ti Embann ar Skolioù brezhonek, editor for Breton schools), I.R.I.S.A. (Institute of Research on Software Engineering and Random Systems), the universities of Rennes I and II and Skol Vreizh decided to work together to develop educational tools based on computer and speech technology. Since there was a lack of technical and linguistic resources, it was decided to go ahead step by step with limited but realistic objectives having the objective of producing simple educational tools within a reasonable period of time, in mind. The project presented here consists of:

- a bilingual spoken dictionary (French / Breton) using speech synthesis available on CDROM with easy access to the spoken form as well as to the written form of each word;
- a Breton spell-checker used within Word.

Diphone synthesis for the Breton language

The T.T.S. system is made up of two main components: a linguistic processor and an acoustic one.

Linguistic processing

The aim of this module is to convert the input text into a sequence of phones and to specify the prosodic information automatically.

Pre-requisite linguistic studies

In order to perform such a task, a number of linguistic studies had to be carried out. The first step, concerning the text-to-phoneme translation, was done by Paskal An Intañv [1]. However, we had major difficulty trying to establish a realistic prosody model for the Breton language. No accurate linguistic study has been carried on that field to our knowledge. Therefore, we had to build a generic model based on statistic measurements on a small corpus of isolated words first, then phrases and sentences. This study also enabled the development team to determine typical durations for each of the phonemes of the vocal database, along with the typical fundamental frequency F0 suitable for the synthesis.

Letter – to – sound rules

About 400 letter – to – sound rules have been written for converting any Breton text into a sequence of phones [1]; these rules take each left and right orthographic context into account. Examples of rules are given here:

a → \tilde{a} / + gn, n, ñ, m;

this rule means that the letter “a” has to be pronounced as \tilde{a} (a nasal vowel) when it is followed by one of the following letters: *gn, n, ñ* or *m*.

anv → \tilde{a} n o / + ioù, _; (the graphemic sequence “anv” is uttered like / \tilde{a} no/ at the end of a word or when followed by the orthographic chain “ioù”)

ai → a i / + g, goù;

ai → a j;

These rules are used in the spoken dictionary to obtain the phonetic transcription of any sentence related to the meanings of a given word. They are not applied to the dictionary entries.

Prosodic processing

This important part of a speech synthesis system involves the prediction of the duration of each phone of the phonetic sequence and, if relevant, the pitch specifications: locations and F0 values. The breton prosodic module is composed of three main components:

- The *syllabic segmenter* using a set of rules for decomposing each word described as a sequence of phonemes into syllables and for deciding whether syllables are stressed or not, using the stress marks in the I.P.A. phonetic description.
- The *duration module* computing the duration of each phone from intrinsic mean values which are multiplied by a dilatation or a compression factor depending upon the syllabic and phonetic context.
- The *pitch module* where the F0 values of each phoneme are computed automatically according to the stress marks and to the sentence type (question, command, assertion, punctuation marks) . An F0 target is allocated to the stressed vowels and the other F0 values depend upon the phone category, its position within the syllable and within the word. These values are modified to take into account the general melodic contour associated with the type of the sentence. This module has to be improved in order to take into account grammatical, syntactic and semantic information and dialectal variations.

Acoustic processing

The objective of this acoustic processing is to create a speech signal from the prosodic – phonetic sequence as defined in the preceding section.

The Speech signal is generated by means of the diphone concatenation technique with the MBROLA (Multi Band Re-synthesis OverLap Add) synthesis system from the University of Mons [2]. Like with the TD – PSOLA technique (Time Domain Pitch Synchronous Overlap and Add [4]) the speech signal is built up by adding overlapping speech frames directly in the time domain. MBROLA is able to smooth spectral discontinuities arising at diphone junction points.

The diphone data base was built up after creating a text corpus, recording it and segmenting the corresponding speech signals. The first step was to establish a list of phones derived from the standard Breton phonemes inventory: it is composed of 11 oral vowels, 8 nasal vowels, 3 semi-vowels and 22 consonants; it is necessary to add 15 diphthongs to this set; that is a total of 60 phonemes; short vowels were distinguished from long vowels and the final set is composed of 80 phones; the corresponding list of Breton diphones was then obtained and a corpus of 3200 logatomes (meaningless artificial words) covering the 3200 Breton diphones was created. A set composed of the most frequent words and of short sentences was added to this corpus for further linguistic and prosodic studies. A female native speaker of central Brittany was recorded, uttering the items of this corpus.

The SNORRI software package [5] was used to segment and to label this speech data base and to extract the diphones; each diphone is characterised by its name, its duration (beginning, middle and end points) and by the related waveforms. This database was then sent to the University of Mons where it was re-synthesised and transformed in order to be used by the MBROLA synthesiser.

Vocal dictionary

The first application is a spoken Breton / French dictionary available on CDROM freely distributed to class-rooms and sold to other users. This dictionary contains about 35000 definitions on both sections and gives ability to navigate on both Breton and French lexical entries; it allows us to listen to diverse pronunciation variants of Breton words.

Word data

The original data was taken from a dictionary paper book [5], available on electronic form (MS Word files); they were translated into the R.T.F. (Rich Text Format) format and then to HTML (Hyper Text Mark up Language) and parsed to obtain a lexical data base with logical distinction of both word definitions and elements within definitions. For each part (French or Breton) of the dictionary, an index of words was built up automatically by using scripts. Orthographic as well as phonetic variants found within the word definitions are included in this index; for instance two different lexical words EMGANNER and EMGANNOUR are extracted from the following concise entry:

EMGANNER, -OUR [...] [...] g. –ion b.1 *batailleur*, -se

Some abbreviations are related to phonetic variants like in the following example:

FUMañ,-iñ [ˈfymã, [-ð], [fymi eʔ] vb., s'irriter.

In this case, the phoneme [ã] of the first phonetic transcription must be replaced by the dialectal variant [ã̃]; but it is not easy to know to what part of the original pronunciation the phonetic variant must be linked. The typographic conventions commonly used in dictionary printing give us the ability to split definitions between several fields: Key field (the word itself), Grammatical Category, Phonetic of common pronunciations, French translation and unstructured text of definition.

Look up system

The searching of a word in the dictionary was formerly based on grep-style research involving regular expressions; finally that procedure was abandoned, due to the lack of efficiency of the algorithm. The look-up system is now based on a much more efficient tree research applied to a tree-like index built from the entries of the dictionary and their orthographic variations (mutations, plurals, and so on); it is characterised by the following properties:

- The ability to look for a list of words beginning (or ending) with an identical orthographic sequence (same prefix, same suffix, same stem);
- The ability to deal with the grammatical mechanism named « mutation », specific to Celtic languages which changes the initial orthographic consonant of a word given its left context: *ki* (dog) is written *ar c'hi* (the dog) when preceded by the article *ar*;
- The possibility to deal with different orthographic systems or even with regular mistakes: (*mat eo* → *mad eo*), or errors suggested by the phonetics like in *sistr*, *chistr*, *jistr* (cider) and the ability to display and to suggest several possible entries when the result of the research is ambiguous;
- The ability to use *wildcards* in order to explore the dictionary and to look up lists of words.

This component has been implemented as an OCX component, which means that it may be used by other applications.

Word pronunciations

When a word is found in the index, its definition is displayed and its usual phonetic variants and stress marks are shown; they are displayed using the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols. Each dialectal pronunciation can be heard by clicking on its phonetic transcription. For instance three dialectal phonetic variants are given for the word “kenavo” which means “good bye”:

KENAVO⁺ var. KENAVEZO [kɛnaˈvo] , [cɛnðvo], [cɛnˈvu] ... K-L estl. *au revoir*, *parfois. Adieu*

The speech signal is generated by synthesising this phonetic sequence. The prosody generator used in the dictionary works differently from the general sentence synthesiser, however: it does not use the letter-to-sound rules, but it directly uses the IPA phonetic description

instead. Besides, it is not made up of three separate modules, but of only one module which splits the words into syllables and computes the durations and frequencies on the fly.

The major advantage with this approach is that the synthesiser does not rely on letter-to-phoneme rules, nor on other rules to determine the stress and intonation on the word: it directly uses the exact phonetic description given by the dictionary, including the stress marks. The major drawback is the impossibility of enhancing the prosody model in a simple way: the source code has to be modified, which may be a difficult task given the lack of modularity of the prosody generator.

Sentence pronunciations

This word pronunciation has been completed by the sentence pronunciation module. Sentences showing words in use are displayed on the interface within a specific frame and can be selected. In this case, the Text-to-Speech Synthesiser is set in motion to generate the speech signal of the selected text.

Interfaces

Since this vocal dictionary has been designed to be used mainly by children, the interface is as friendly as possible. Very simple graphic illustrations and animated video have been incorporated into the system; help facilities and several buttons allow the user to be familiarised with this tool very quickly, to deal with the abbreviations, to listen to specific sounds, to modify the duration of the synthesised speech, etc.

Evaluation

A first evaluation of the beta test product took place in 1998; a dozen teachers tested this version; the interface was modified and new functions were added like the possibility of typing in a French word and directly accessing its Breton translation, phonetic transcription and pronunciation. This is very helpful to people not familiar with the Breton language. The possibility of displaying the dialectal origin of each variant of pronunciation is another functionality to be integrated. The speech synthesis must also be improved at both level (segmental and supra-segmental).

The new organisation of the vocal dictionary

This dictionary has been reorganised like a Data Base in order to use specific tools related to Access:

- Tools for modifying, updating, adding new entities into the dictionary;
- Powerful Search techniques for looking for words or for lists of words sharing common suffixes or prefixes and for dealing with misspelled words;
- Procedures for accessing any dictionary item or definition from another application.

Building up the new data base

An automatic procedure allows the new structure to be created and the HTML definitions to be exported towards the data base. For each section of the dictionary the word management is

composed of two parts: spellings and definitions, each of them with a specific indexing approach.

The indexing of definitions is made up of 5 items: word name, list of relevant spelling forms, preceding definition number based on the alphabetical order, following definition number, personalization flag.

The index of the spelling variants is a tree-structured one with each node corresponding to a letter of the alphabet. With this kind of structure, the word search is very fast. In order to deal with the lack of accents, non relevant orthographic forms have been added. The searching of a word is characterised by the following possibilities: exact search, search with wildcards and approximate search.

Customising the dictionary

The user can customise the dictionary by adding new words, deleting added words, modifying existing words. Each new word can be edited and given a definition and spelling or phonetic variants can be added. For existing words, it is possible to modify their definition, to add new examples of use and to modify spelling and phonetic forms. This is done in a customised file and the original one is not altered by these modifications.

Word Processor and Spell – Checker

The newly created lookup system of the dictionary was implemented in an OCX component, easily re-useable in lots of Windows-based applications, and particularly in word processors. The idea is to use this research facility in the dictionary in order to read a text, and look up every word of the text in the dictionary, suggesting replacement words based on the list of the relevant spelling forms, when the searched entry is not found. It only takes a few hours to create a macro which performs this kind of process on a selected text in Microsoft Word97, for example, using Visual Basic for Applications.

Possible enhancements and future developments

The speech synthesis system

There are two phonetic/prosody synthesis systems working in parallel in the current dictionary application; one is purely based on text-to-speech rules, the other is based on the IPA phonetic descriptions listed in the dictionary. Our final goal is to merge both systems into one, using rules for the synthesis of sentences, but also using the phonetic descriptions of individual words, contained in the dictionary, as much as possible since rules always have exceptions. Considering the fact that these rules are not clearly defined in any detailed linguistic study, we also think that it might be interesting for a final user to add his/her own rules, depending on the targeted dialect; this would enable the research team to get the feedback from their users and to integrate new sets of rules.

The interface of the dictionary

With the re-organisation of the dictionary database, it should be easier to choose which fields of a record should be displayed in the interface. Some users may wish to have only one phonetic description corresponding to their dialect; other may not need all the examples

mentioned in the record, and so on. It should be possible in the future to configure the interface so that only the desired fields be displayed.

Another interesting point would be the possibility of customising the dictionary, not only for the contents of the definitions, but also for the multimedia objects (pictures, sound, movies) to be associated with a given definition. Since it is difficult for our work-team to associate such an object with all the entries, we thought it interesting to leave it up to teachers, for instance, and to the imagination of the end-users. A special feature will be inserted into the editor to provide for this possibility.

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Journal Writing Revisited: A Follow-up Study in an Irish Language Class

Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew

Linguistics Department
619 Williams Hall
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6305
U.S.A.

jladrew@chesco.com Email
rblyn@sas.upenn.edu Email
610-942-8688 Tel
610-942-8688 Fax

Abstract

This article analyses the results of journal-writing in Irish language classes in a university setting. Advantages and disadvantages of the project are weighed, concluding that it is an effective and stimulating supplement to other teaching methods but that it involves much extra commitment on the part of the teacher and extra participation on the part of the student. The article also discusses recent changes made from the original project as first assigned in 1994-95 to streamline its administration and assessment.

Introduction

From puppet shows to harp demonstrations to robot dogs, from translations of haiku to translations of the sayings of the Delphic oracle, I would never have imagined the creative outpouring which has resulted from the journal writing segment of my first- and second-year Irish language classes at the University of Pennsylvania. While I expected brief prose passages about Thanksgiving dinners and summer vacations, with perhaps an occasional poem or dialogue, the multidimensional, artistic and thought-provoking projects inspired me to start videotaping them and these videotapes provide the material for this analysis.

A preliminary report on this was presented at NAACLT in 1995 and published in the first volume of the Journal of Celtic Language Learning as "Journal Writing as a Method of Student Motivation in Irish Language Class." Today's paper will discuss changes I have made in the project since its earliest versions, other class activities derived from it, and further thoughts on how to make this activity an even more efficient and fun way of learning and teaching.

Description of the Original and Current Projects

The original assignment was to write about 50 words weekly, describing scenes or activities or writing conversations, being sure to use some of the most recently covered grammar and vocabulary. Students could also use up to five new words per entry, to be listed below the passage with categories such as gender or declension. Specific suggestions were made on certain structures to avoid, those that would lead the student down complex avenues of

sentence structure and word order. The last day of the semester would be devoted to oral presentations of an entry the student selected. The weekly written entries would be corrected, but not graded, and the oral presentation would be graded more on preparation and delivery than on unfamiliar grammar. Students were encouraged to experiment in small ways, knowing that unpredictable grammar errors would not count against them but that grammar already covered would be graded.

In most aspects, the project is the same as when first assigned, except for the following:

- 1) Now students do two oral presentations per semester, not just one.
- 2) First-year students start out with a non-journal presentation, "The Internet Presentation," to help them adjust to using the Irish language in public speaking. They must find a website pertaining to Ireland that uses at least one word in the Irish language, which they will then teach the class. The class knows these words will be included on quizzes and tests, and so there is incentive to pay attention and take notes. Typical vocabulary words chosen for this have been ceol, coláiste, and cláirseach. Students are not restricted to Internet research, but have consistently chosen this as a quick and favoured research method.
- 3) Requirements have been made a little stricter, to limit the number of new vocabulary words used per entry and to ensure enough questions are asked by presenter and audience. Some enthusiastic students were using a dozen or more new words, leading to counterproductivity since that much new material in a short passage is bound to lead to mixed idioms, convoluted word order and poor application of the new vocabulary to the known rules.
- 4) Students are encouraged to resubmit a previous journal with many corrections to ensure that the corrections will be applied (and understood). In the future, this will be a requirement.
- 5) Initially the project started with five vocabulary words to be learned with each oral presentation, but as classes have gotten larger and as more different oral projects have been assigned, fewer vocabulary words from each seem appropriate.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Journal Writing

Advantages: The project presents both advantages and disadvantages to students and to the instructor, but the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Students seem to enjoy these projects very much, relaxing, using the language in a meaningful way, and learning both about Irish culture and about each other. After the first session of oral presentations, the class becomes closer as a small group, in the sociological sense as pioneered by Olmsted, and works together, providing mutual assistance in the mastery of difficult material and a very challenging language.

The journal presentations have also led to further similar projects which likewise combine L2 writing and speaking practice, cultural information, and an opportunity for students to somewhat personalise the class material. Specifically these projects have included a St.

Bridget's Day presentation, a St. Patrick's Day presentation, and the latest addition, the surprisingly popular "parts of speech" presentation.

Students who may struggle with grammar, vocabulary retention, and listening comprehension, blossom when given the opportunity to say what they did on St. Patrick's Day or to describe the St. Bridget's Bread their grandmother used to make. Many foreign language teachers have observed that students often learn very well from each other, and along these lines, having different students responsible for defining and providing examples of prepositional phrases, vocative case usage, plural endings, or verbs in the past tense seems to make basic grammar, now considered almost taboo in language pedagogy, appealing and conquerable. For this project, the students prepare a handout with a definition of their topic, examples culled from the textbook, and questions which they will ask the class using the relevant features.

Disadvantages: The more freedom you give the students, the less control you have, both of the overall cultural content and message and in specifics (are grammar and vocabulary correctly presented? genders? declensions? consistency in verb tense? confusion with Scottish Gaelic or Hiberno-English?).

There are some logistical concerns. The one thing which I told them not to bring in to the sessions at the audio-visual center was any type of food or drink, since these were prohibited in all parts of the lab. Prior to that, some of my classes had included a soda bread competition, with a student vote and handmade award certificate in Irish for best soda bread, and other miniature feasts for which I had provided placards with the Irish names of the foods. Food is certainly a sure-fire way to stimulate interest in learning, but that was not an option here. One presentation which I would never have predicted caused momentary panic, at least for me as the instructor: the student brought in a brick of dried peat and calmly proceeded to pull out a barbecue lighter and lit the brick. The room quickly filled with the pungent peat smell and the student started to describe his trip to Ireland where he saw peat bogs and bought the souvenir. I immediately realised this might set alarms off and asked him to extinguish the brick, which he did. No alarms rang and we continued class in a vaguely aromatic setting that in fact might put one nicely in mind of sitting by a turf fire, hearing stories, conversation, or "craic." I was glad ours was the last class of the evening in that building.

I have been considering the idea of not having the students present a written text to the class, just the vocabulary words on a handout, but I am concerned that students would feel more limited in expression or in how much their classmates comprehend. Instead, I am encouraging students to write up their oral presentation earlier in the semester, so it can be corrected before distribution. Another incentive that I may introduce is to split apart the credit for this assignment so part of the credit is for a revised follow-up written handout that the student will distribute. For many students this is a much higher motivation than the abstract concept that their handout may contain errors.

Another way in which I think the projects could be made even more effective is to require more interactivity following each the presentation. Currently the students are required to ask each class member a question about their project. They can write the questions down but the questions are not supposed to be on the handouts. One of the most difficult barriers to break is the reluctance of the students in the audience to ask their own questions to the speaker. So

far, I haven't made this an official requirement, but am considering it as a way to create more conversation and have more practice.

Ultimately, the more minutia in grading, the more likely you are to have all parts of a project completed and to have consistent participation. Of course, the more such minutia, the more work for the teacher, but it is certainly stimulating and rewarding for all involved!

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The Breton Language : From Taboo to Recognition

Ronan Le Coadic

IUFM, Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres, de Bretagne
1, rue Théodule Ribot
22022 Saint-Brieuc cedex 1

ronan.le-coadic@bretagne.iufm.fr Email
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/2209/> URL
+33 2 96 435706 Tel/Fax

Abstract

Chom a ra ur seurt tabou war ar brezhoneg c'hoazh. 'Benn lemel 'nezhañ penn-da-benn 'vefe ret kas ur "politikerezh anavout" da benn : dav 'vefe d'ar Stad c'hall anaout ar brezhoneg, evel just ; met dav 'vefe ivez d'ar vrezhonegerien desket anavout ar vrezhonegerien a-vihanik. Etre an daou rummad tud-se zo pontoù da sevel.

Introduction

In 1993, while doing a study among students from the public high-school of Landerneau (Finistère) on individual and family practice of the Breton language, I observed the following reactions. When I presented the theme of my study, many students could not help laughing, others blushed and only a few of the "best" students sitting in the front row remained calm, raising their hand to ask for further technical details. This was exactly the behavior that my junior high-school classmates and I had adopted twenty years ago while attending a class on sexual education... This awakened my curiosity. Might there be a link between the repression of the Breton language and the repression of sexuality ? Later in the 1990's, as I was carrying out semi-directive interviews on Breton identity, this premonition seemed to be confirmed by the lapsus or the embarrassment expressed by several of the adults being questioned. Some of them seemed to harbor a secret and deep-seeded discomfort regarding issues of language and identity. These questions evoked something dirty and immoral, perhaps even dangerous, which should be hidden at all cost. Was this not a taboo, or the remains of a taboo ? This is the hypothesis I shall be presenting here. As far as the Breton language is concerned, there remains a taboo. A policy of recognition is needed for such a taboo to be lifted once and for all.

The Taboo

"Taboo" is a Polynesian word meaning a prohibition system of a sacred nature applied to something impure. If one admits that we are indeed dealing with a taboo, then the "sacred" might well be the French Republic "one and undivided", which supposedly liberates individuals from community oppression and gives them access to modernity and to universality. That which is Breton would then be considered "impure", such as "tradition", which inhibits individuals and binds them to their social condition and to their ancestral territory. Finally the prohibition system would be mainly, but not only, enforced by the school system. During the entire first half of the century schools did indeed punish children who spoke Breton, and went so far as to set up a system encouraging them to tell on each

other, thus giving them a humiliating image of themselves. Yet in the broader sense, the prohibition system is not limited only to schools. From the 19th century until the second World War, images of backward Bretons and of an insignificant and ridiculous Brittany were spread across France by way of literature¹, popular writings, travel guides, comic books, songs, figurines, etc. The comic-book character, Becassine, a good-for-all maid "so stupid but so devoted"², is a perfect illustration of the widespread image of Brittany as folkloric and ridiculous. As a result of all this, many generations of Bretons have harbored feelings of shame, even perhaps of self-loathing, leading them to repress their singularity – most notably the pleasure of practicing their mother tongue – as if these were inadmissible practices. Today this shame and self-hatred are far from having disappeared. They are latent among many Bretons, and especially present among those who felt particularly stigmatized for their language or their accents. Such is the case of Aline (a farmer born in 1960) who compares the Breton language to an infirmity.

Aline : When I was little in school it was almost shameful to live in an environment like we had at home. I mean, to have parents who always spoke to us in Breton (...) We felt this to be a defect. And we had to hide it. So we considered it a bit like an abscess that we shouldn't show. (...) In my opinion, that's what it's like. Like someone who has a lump on his back. It's a handicap³.

Helen, born in 1953 and married to a fisherman, describes how her accent represents the trauma of her life.

Helen : I'm a bit embarrassed because of my Breton accent. And ever since I was very small in school I was teased because of it. And that stayed with me until today. (...) I was embarrassed, really embarrassed, yes. (...) Even though at home I was forbidden to speak Breton. My parents always spoke Breton and forbade us to answer in Breton. Forbidden ! (...) My teachers often told me... Teasing me a little. They said : "But it's going to prevent you from finding work !" (...) Sometimes I'd say to myself : "Oh, if I could have lived somewhere else, if I could go away... " (...) I even cried about it for a while. Really. I was really affected ! (...) So when someone came to the house, like now, the way you just arrived, I would leave. I would go out of the house. I would go down to the river, over there⁴.

Despite these terrible examples, it seems that today the taboo is progressively being lifted.

Recognition

The first sign that the taboo is being lifted is that for some time now one has been hearing much talk about the Breton language, especially in the press and in regional media. In fact so much so that a reporter at *Ouest-France*⁵ wrote : "As far as the Breton language is concerned, the less it is spoken, the more it is talked about"... Indeed, the rates of practice of the Breton language continue to decrease : from 75 % at the beginning of the century, they have gone down to 17 % in the 1990's (approximately 240 000 speakers). The taboo is being lifted because the Breton language presently poses much less of a threat to French unity. Nowadays there are no more monolingual native speakers of Breton, and the rate of practice is so low that the few remaining people who still consider the language to be a threat to the Republic

appear to be waging an out of date battle. Presently, 88 % of those living in lower-Brittany think it "necessary to preserve the Breton language"⁶. The ambiguity lies in this notion of "preservation". Do we want to preserve traces of our linguistic heritage in the same way that we preserve totems in museums ? Or do we want to lift the implicit prohibition which still weighs upon many minds and encourage both popular practice of the Breton language and its transmission through the generations ?

Lifting the taboo would mean bringing Bretons to sincerely believe that expressing oneself in Breton is not shameful, and consequently, that they can pass on their language to their children. Today we are still far from having reached such a point. While young militants have struggled for recognition of the Breton language, for visibility within French society, and for the language to be taught in schools and used in the media, in practice they have not been followed by native speakers of the language. Members of the latter group (retired people, farmers, factory workers and artisans), are mostly over fifty years old, relatively uneducated and settled in rural areas. Their practice of the Breton language is endogamous. In other words, they only speak Breton with people who belong to the same milieu as themselves (family members, friends, neighbors), or sometimes with individuals whose age, accent, demeanor and behavior indicate that they belong to a similar social group. When a young person speaks Breton it disturbs their image of the world. Except perhaps in recent years, ever since media coverage of the *Diwan*⁷ schools has made them so popular. Nowadays, meeting a child who speaks Breton has entered the realm of possibilities for native speakers, but they still regard it as unreal and artificial. When this happens, the first thing they do is ask the parents whether the child attends a *Diwan* school. Then they attempt to exchange a few words in Breton with the child. But very rapidly they prefer to switch to French, considering that "they do not speak the same Breton" or that the child speaks "real Breton". As long as native speakers remain passive witnesses to the cultural revival, the rate of transmission of the language will remain close to zero⁸. For indeed, new speakers of Breton are too few to have any real impact on overall statistics. What can be done to reverse the tendency ? Here are a few suggestions.

First of all, it would be useful to admit that there is a taboo, or rather that it existed in the past and has left wounds which remain unhealed. In order to free native speakers from their embarrassment, one must act positively. *Diwan* has done this by creating a parallel school system. Any form of demand expressed through negative actions (violence, vandalism, etc.) is likely to "recharge" the taboo like a battery and to confront the native speakers once again with their negative identity.

Secondly, a policy of recognition should be developed. As Charles Taylor explains : "recognition is not simply a way of being polite to people, it is a vital human need"⁹. If such a policy is developed by the Republican State, which is still considered in some ways as sacred, it will have immediate effects. However, it is obvious that the State will enforce such a policy only if it is firmly encouraged to do so. The Breton militants have been expressing such encouragement for years now. I wish however to point out that a policy of recognition should not come only from the State, but it should begin with the promoters of the Breton language themselves.

Recognition begins with humility. All those who have worked at collecting idioms will agree to the following : each conversation with a native speaker offers treasures of unknown expressions and words, colorful images and wonderful proverbs to those who know how to

listen. The wealth of those born with the Breton language is immeasurable. Yet it is not always easy for the young, urban, well-educated militants, often working in the academic and intellectual professions, to see that in the backwoods of the countryside, the most humble speakers remain the true kings of the Breton language. This, however, is the most important fact. Yet as long as native speakers do not value it and do not pass it on to their children, their wealth remains unproductive. This is why its value must be recognized.

In order to do this, one must first of all heighten the neo-Breton speakers' awareness of the fact that learning any language necessarily entails immersing oneself among native speakers. Too often do we forget this obvious fact. Yet the truth is that colloquial Breton is made up of a variety of dialects found mainly in rural areas. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, it is not considered "natural" in such an environment to be speaking in Breton to a young person, especially if the youngster is from the city. In order to communicate with native speakers, young neo-Breton speakers will therefore have to overcome their elders' resistance. With this objective in mind, they will have to become familiar with those living in rural areas. This requires them to they learn three lessons : first, some notions of dialectology ; second, practical knowledge of a few of the social codes most in use among those living in a rural environment ; third, a capacity to reflect upon the meaning of their own practice and upon the kind of language they wish to use and to transmit. Once these basic lessons have been learned, different types of training may be proposed.

The fact that throughout Brittany one finds approximately 240 000 native speakers should make it possible to set up an organized network of internships among rural families, for the benefit of those adults who wish to learn the language. The impact of such a network would be great. It would improve the quality of the language learned by adults, while at the same time having a psychological impact upon the native speakers whose language would thus be given more recognition. This might eventually bring them to develop a desire to read and write in their language.

Indeed, almost all native speakers of Breton are illiterate in their native language. Teaching them how to read and write should be a priority. Yet, strangely enough, there are practically no such training for those whose mother tongue is Breton, even though when it is offered reactions are quite favorable.

In addition to this, a simple policy aimed at helping children learn good quality Breton could be set up in schools. Each child would be required to meet regularly with an "elderly friend" living in his or her neighborhood. Elderly people would no doubt be very happy to make such a contribution and to receive the visit of a child to whom they could pass on part of their linguistic heritage.

In order to carry out the above mentioned steps it would be very useful to develop teaching materials which combine the vernacular language and the more classical written language. Such efforts have already been made, and should be encouraged. Finally, one might create opportunities for Breton-speakers from the city and Breton-speakers from the countryside to meet with each other, by, for example, inviting native speakers to visit schools or language classes, or by sending schoolchildren and students to visit the homes of native-speakers. The ideal solution would be to set up several permanent meeting centers, offering various types of cultural activities, likely to attract both types of speakers and whose function would be to encourage regular exchanges.

Conclusion

Is the Breton language's present popularity merely a mean for cultural distraction or is it a sign of reproduction ? If the first hypothesis is true, rates of transmission among locals are likely to remain very low and the practice of Breton limited to a happy few. In this case, the language would likely become the cultural capital of a small community, similar to other present day minority groups who are sometimes at risk of living in a closed environment. The attempts at revival we are witnessing today might, as always in cases of endogamy, produce a strange fruit : a half-baked language made up of Breton or neo-Breton words and of French syntax and pronunciation.

In order for the natural reproduction of a living species to take place, two different partners must come together. As far as the Breton language is concerned, these two partners are the native speakers and the neo-Breton speakers.

References

1. For instance : Balzac, *Les Chouans*, Victor Hugo, *Quatrevingt-treize* and Flaubert, *Par les champs et par les grèves*.
2. Ory, Pascal, " La Bretagne dans la littérature enfantine et la bande dessinée ", in Balcou et Le Gallo (ed.), *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne*, Paris-Genève, Champion-Slatkine, 1987, t. 3, p. 373.
3. Le Coadic, Ronan, *L'Identité bretonne*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes and Terre de Brume, 1998, p. 197.
4. *Idem*, p. 187.
5. *Ouest-France* is a regional daily newspaper. It has the highest circulation of any French daily newspaper.
6. Results of a poll on the practice of Breton done on a sample of 2 500 people by the TMO Ouest Institute in March-April of 1997, for *Le Télégramme* and France 3 Ouest. Cf. *Le Télégramme*, April 12-13, 1997, last page.
7. The *Diwan* schools are cooperative schools in the Breton language, created in 1977. Their popularity has led to the creation of public and private catholic schools offering bilingual classes. 6 000 children are presently enrolled in the bilingual sections.
8. Laurent, Loeiz, " La connaissance du breton ", *Octant*, n° 56-57, 1993, pp. 7-12.
9. Taylor, Charles, *Multiculturalisme. Différence et démocratie*, Paris, Flammarion, 1994, p. 42.

To Secure an Anchor for Our Celtic Souls: An Integrated Development Programme for Manx Gaelic

Philip Gawne

Yn Greinneyder
Thie Vaddrell
Cregneash
Isle of Man

greinney@enterprise.net Email
+44 1624 834844 Tel

Abstract

Over the past ten years there have been many significant developments in support of the Manx language. This paper attempts to identify the most important issues which will need to be addressed over the next 10 years.

Introduction

In April 1998, I began work as 'Yn Greinneyder' (Manx Language Development Officer) for Manx National Heritage (MNH) and the Manx Heritage Foundation (MHF) the two main cultural/heritage organisations in the Isle of Man. The primary task I was given was to produce an Integrated Development Programme for Manx Gaelic incorporating the work of public, private and voluntary organisations. In writing this programme, I have built on two previous Manx Government reports - "Report of the Select Committee on the Greater Use of Manx Gaelic – 1984" and "The Future Development of the Manx Language – A report to Tynwald by the Department of Education (DoE) - 1995".

In considering the long term viability of our language two immediate areas for action are readily identifiable. We must improve and expand the facilities for teaching Manx, and we must do more to show the majority of people living in the Isle of Man that Manx is worthy of support. Education has perhaps the most important role to play in this regard, though Manx Gaelic can be used in Economic, Social and Political Development and in the Media, Arts and Cultural Development to help achieve these goals.

Why do we need Manx?

Perhaps the most important element I have had to address in the programme is the reason for bothering to support or develop a language which for much of the twentieth century was being declared dead by prominent linguists. I have endeavoured to do this by expanding on the cultural significance of Manx Gaelic and its related traditional culture.

Through cultural reconstruction the wide range of interests which make up contemporary Manx culture in Mann can be brought together to build and strengthen our sense of place, community and national identity, which have been considerably weakened over recent

decades. If this reconstruction is not to be wholly artificial, it must draw heavily on our traditional, Manx Gaelic derived culture. I have used the themes of cultural reconstruction/development and sense of community and identity throughout the programme to reinforce my reasoning for development in the areas outlined below.

Government Support Structures for Manx

Manx Gaelic currently receives support from the Department of Education (DoE), MNH, MHF and the IOM Arts Council, however, the level of support remains modest when compared with support given to Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Irish. It is also true to say that Government support for Manx Gaelic is to some extent haphazard in its application and the few existing Departmental budgets for Manx Gaelic are far from secure.

If there is to be a successful expansion of provision of Manx Gaelic services, even to meet current demand, then there must be greater security in the support infrastructure for the language. To this end it is important that either a current Government agency or department, or a new Government body be established to take specific responsibility for the development and coordination of Government policy on Manx Gaelic together with the implementation of this policy.

I would envisage that this proposed body might include political representation through Tynwald members, representation from appropriate Government Departments, and, most importantly, representation from the voluntary organisations such as Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh (Manx Gaelic Society), Moinjer Veggey (Manx Preschool Organisation) and Caarjyn ny Gaelgey (Friends of the Manx Gaelic). The body would have a similar function to the MHF in terms of providing grant aid to Manx Gaelic projects, as well as employing at least two full time development officers.

Of these officers, one would be responsible for administration, policy development and coordination of Manx Gaelic policy throughout Government. This officer would work with the DoE, MNH, MHF and other Manx Gaelic Governmental organisations providing support and advice as appropriate. The second officer would provide support for adult and preschool education (including resource development, promotion and administrative support) and would introduce and manage a suitable support structure for Manx Gaelic related cultural activities such as music, song, dance, folklore and literature (including Manx English).

To keep up with current grant aid to Manx Gaelic, the new body would need to have a grants budget of around £40-60,000. The officers would work closely with organisations which received aid to ensure effective use of the money was made and that different organisations were not working needlessly on the same subjects.

Education

Department of Education – The DoE is currently providing a very effective programme for raising the profile of Manx and ensuring that a large proportion of children in Manx schools attend Manx lessons during their school years. The introduction of the Teisht Chadjin Ghaelgagh TCG and endeavours to introduce an 'A' level in Manx are crucially important in ensuring that Manx is taken seriously as an academic discipline. However, despite overwhelming pressure for more teachers for the Manx language team to ensure adequate