University *of* Limerick

Centre for Applied Language Studies

Newsletter

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in English or Gaeilge**

http://www.ul.ie/~lcs/cals

About CALS

The Centre for Applied Language Studies, established in 1997, brings together members of faculty, full-time post-doctoral researchers and postgraduate students from several disciplines in the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies (LCS) and provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and the development of research projects. Associate members with similar research interests from other universities may also be invited to join the Centre, which currently has 35 members.

The objectives of the Centre are:

- To provide a focus for research into applied language studies within the University and a focal point for national and international links;
- To promote the integration of research and the application of language activities in areas such as language learning, language planning and policy, and corpus linguistics;
- To serve as a research resource and a source of consultancy expertise to government, business, social organisations and supra-national structures.

Activities include individual and collaborative projects, seminars for research and staff development, the publication of books and articles, and consultancy at national and international level.

Current research areas include:

- The learning of foreign and second languages;
- The role of new technologies in supporting this learning;
- The ways in which governments and societies can manage the linguistic and human dimensions of bilingualism and multilingualism;
- The language of the media in a world of globalisation.

Adjunct Professor joins CALS

Michael McCarthy, a leading scholar and researcher in English corpus linguistics, has accepted an invitation to become a member of CALS, in recognition of his invaluable work for the Centre and the University, including frequent visits as a member of research project teams, guest lecturer, and supervisor of a number of doctoral theses.

A graduate of Downing College, Cambridge, Michael McCarthy is Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics at the University of Nottingham and also adjunct professor at The Pennsylvania State University and at the University of Limerick (since 2002). The author of 25 books and more than 50 academic papers, he served as co-editor of the Oxford University Press journal, *Applied Linguistics* from 1994-1998, and has been a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts since 2001. He also acts as academic consultant to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* and the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms and Phrases*. He is co-director (with Ronald Carter) of the 5-million word Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English (CANCODE), sponsored by Cambridge University Press, at the University of Nottingham. Within the area of corpus linguistics, he is known for his publications concerning the nature of spoken language, in particular for the view that it should be analysed in its own right, and not as a deviation from the written norm. He argues for the need to create a new meta-language for the analysis of spoken language.

After a period as external examiner in UL for courses in English Language Teaching and English as a Foreign Language in the 1990s, Professor McCarthy became involved in the development of research in this area in UL and MIC. In particular, he has participated in the creation and development of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (L-CIE) since its initiation in 1998. L-CIE is a joint project between UL and MIC, whose outcome has been a one-million word corpus of spoken English, built on the model of CANCODE and now available online for use in both institutions. As part of the L-CIE endeavour, he has been part of a team that has raised more than €150,000 in funding granted to UL/MIC over a five-year period. The corpus is currently being used for teaching and research purposes and has led to many international conference presentations and joint publications between Professor McCarthy and UL/MIC faculty and postgraduate research students. CALS members look forward to continuing collaboration with him in the coming years.

IRCHSS Update

Triona Hourigan (BA in Applied Languages, UL, 2001, and MA in French, UL, 2002) was awarded an IRCHSS Postgraduate Research Scholarship in May. Her PhD is entitled "An Investigation into Automated Summarising Technology for Language Learning Purposes" and is concerned with evaluating summarisation technology for the purposes of second language acquisition.

Eurocall Conference and Headquarters at UL

The European Association for Computer Assisted Language Learning (EUROCALL) held its annual conference at UL from September 3-6, 2003. The conference theme of "New literacies in language learning and teaching" aimed at focusing attention on the changing concepts and practices concerning literacy brought about by technological developments, particularly in relation to language learning and teaching. The five sub-themes included "Spoken and written corpora in language teaching and learning", which re-introduced to EUROCALL an important research area which had been well represented in the early days of the association, and this led directly to the creation of a new Special Interest Group in March 2004.

Keynote speeches were given by Professor Michael McCarthy, Professor Emeritus at the University of Nottingham and adjunct professor at the University of Limerick and Penn State University; Robin Goodfellow, Open University, UK; and Professor Dieter Wolff, Bergische Universität Wuppertal. In addition, about 180 papers were presented, a selection of which appear in the latest issue (16.1) of the Association's Journal, *ReCALL*, published by Cambridge University Press. Abstracts of papers and poster presentations, as well as photographs of participants and of the campus, may be found on the conference web site at
http://www.iccconcepts.com/eurocall/pages/abstracts2.html.

The conference marked the 10th anniversary of the Association and the changeover to the new headquarters in UL, so there was both a celebratory atmosphere and a tinge of nostalgia at the retirement from the posts of treasurer and secretary of two of the Association's most popular members, Graham Chesters and June Thompson. The incoming treasurer Angela Chambers and secretary Margaret Gammell were warmly welcomed as they took up the reins for a period of three years. They have a difficult task to follow in the footsteps of Graham and June, whose vision and hard work have made the Association the exemplary and highly professional body that it has become today.

Language Support Unit Begins Work

The Language Support Unit (LSU), based in the existing Language Resource Area, was set up last November following the success of Martin Chappell (Head of the LCS Dept.) and Dr Jean Conacher's HEA application which led to the allocation of €50,000 under the HEA Targeted Initiatives Scheme.

In December 2003, Catherine Jeanneau was appointed Research and Development Manager of the Language Support Unit (LSU). This project falls under the Student Retention Strand and thus aims at supporting students experiencing difficulties in their language studies, raising the level of borderline students and providing dedicated support for mature students. To date, the support provided has taken the form of one-to-one sessions with native speakers, learning skills workshops and extra language tutorials for at-risk students. Learner support material has been created for each activity (covering essay writing, oral exam preparation, revision and exam preparation). This material has been distributed widely to students. The activities were in response to needs identified by lecturing and teaching staff (based on previous in-class and exam performance of students in the at-risk groups) and also by mature students in conjunction with the Mature Student Office.

In total, the activities offered by the LSU have been taken up by over 200 students ranging from 1st year to MA students including mature students in the 5 languages offered by the LCS dept (French, German, Spanish, Irish and Japanese). A further 200 students have received custom-designed material providing learning guidance. All the students who were given support have received a questionnaire by email to assess the usefulness of the service offered by the LSU. The feedback from the students indicates both a high level of satisfaction with the services and the need for such support structures, the most popular being the final language oral examination preparation.

In the autumn term, the LSU has increased its activities. Language Support Advisers, usually native speakers of the language previously trained for this project, are available for several hours one evening per language for the whole term. Their role is to help students find the best way to improve their language learning. A series of workshops on study and learning skills will be offered to language students regularly during the term. An essay-writing clinic is offered to all 2nd year students of the LCS department. There are several other projects being discussed but their development will depend on the renewal of the funding.

TeMCU: Teacher training for the Multicultural Classroom at University

TeMCU is a project financed by the EU to design a training programme for the multicultural classroom in universities. It is led by staff at the University of Granada, Spain in collaboration with teaching staff from four other universities, including the University of Limerick (the three other partner institutions are the University of Cyprus, John Moores University-UK, and the University of Ljubljana-Slovenia.)

The project's aim is to design a training module for teaching staff to help them deal with multicultural student bodies. The enlargement of the EU and the European Higher Education Area means that student mobility is increasingly common in our universities, often giving rise to heterogeneous student groups (with different languages, cultures, learning styles, expectations and so on). This new situation presents a challenge to teaching staff, and requires us to reflect on new approaches to deal with multicultural classrooms. So far, little has been done to train staff for this new reality. There seems, therefore, to be a need to design training modules for university teaching staff to deal with this new situation, as indeed preliminary studies amongst lecturers confirm.

The project was approved in December 2003 and we had our first meeting in Granada in January 2004. In our first work session, we divided up the work among the institutions and drafted a detailed plan of the project. We also had a meeting with the Socrates Office representative. In our second meeting in Cyprus, we started working on questionnaires and discussed interview design and implementation.

The LCS Department, to which the three project members from UL belong, will be hosting the next meeting in February 2005.

More information on the project can be had from Dr. Carolina P. Amador Moreno of LCS. (Carolina.Amador@ul.ie)

Integrating Research and Teaching: UCOLL

Using Corpora in Language Learning (UCOLL) is the title of a project undertaken by seven CALS members in order to develop teaching applications based on the findings of current research in corpus linguistics. The project, which was funded by the College of Humanities Teaching Board, aimed to develop teaching resources in the form of small corpora in English, French, Gaeilge, German, and Spanish, and to provide training to members of the LCS Department in the use of these corpora by language teachers and learners.

This development can be seen as part of a paradigm shift in language learning and teaching, whereby teaching is based on examples of real language use, rather than invented examples in grammars and course books. Equally important, students, as independent learners, can consult corpora using concordancing software as a means of improving their language skills through discovery learning.

Two corpora were created in each language, an academic corpus and a journalistic corpus. Each academic corpus contains approximately 50 000 words and is made up of a number of refereed articles and chapters of theses written by native speakers of the language. These specialised corpora now serve as models for student writing, particularly essays and Masters dissertations. The journalistic corpora, each containing approximately 100 000 words, also provide models of native speaker writing on a variety of topical issues. The corpora are now available on CD ROM in the Language Resource Area, as well as on a number of PCs in one of the LRA's computer-assisted language learning laboratories.

On 12 February 2004 a training course for members of the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, organised by Íde O'Sullivan, filled all the available places (17), and was attended by colleagues from a number of the languages in the Department, with particularly strong representation from Spanish. The corpora are now being regularly used as a resource on a number of undergraduate and postgraduate modules.

Members of the UCOLL Project Team include Angela Chambers (Director), Íde O'Sullivan (Project Manager), Núria Borrull, Jean Conacher, Fiona Farr, Seosamh Mac Muirí, and Mairéad Moriarty.

CALS Research Day 2004

Following the success of last year's event, the second CALS Research Day, organised by the Associate Director of CALS, Dr Jean Conacher, was held in the John Holland Lecture Theatre on 10 June 2004, with over 25 faculty and postgraduates participating. The CALS Research Day gives members of the Centre for Applied Language Studies an opportunity to present and discuss their current research work, to explore new directions for research and to contribute to the strategic planning of future activities. The day opened with a brief welcome from Martin Chappell, Head, Department of LCS, followed by a series of presentations and discussion fora which once again highlighted the richness and diversity of work undertaken within the research centre.

In her presentation, Dr Anne O'Keeffe (MIC) explored the possibilities of using a corpus linguistics approach to examine people's use of vague category markers 'and things like that' (!), while Dr Marie-Thérèse Batardière continued by presenting her findings on the impact of study abroad on students' written performance in French.

Following coffee, Dr Helen Kelly-Holmes, UL Research Scholar, reported on CALS postgraduate research activity over the year and provided a short introduction to the function and design of conference posters, before CALS postgraduates, Mairéad Moriarty, Bróna Murphy, and Shaun Nolan, analysed posters they had recently presented at external conferences. This was followed by an informal poster session which allowed participants to ask questions on both design and research aspects of individual posters. Dr Jean Conacher next presented a paper on the need for dialogue between research on learner autonomy and community of practice theory in relation to language learning.

In the afternoon, Catherine Jeanneau (Language Support Unit) shared the initial findings of a new initiative to support non-traditional adult language learners, combining elements of self-directed learning, self-access and language advising. This was followed by a paper from Dr David Atkinson on the sociolinguistic choices made by advertisers in parallel Spanish and Catalan newspapers in Catalonia.

In the final session of the day, Professor Angela Chambers, Director of CALS, presented a report on the recent review of research centres and possible future directions for CALS, while Dr Eugene O'Brien, Assistant Dean of Research in the College of Humanities, responded with a discussion relating to the support in particular for postgraduate research within the Centre, College and University.

Postgraduate Conference 2004

On Monday, May 24th 2004, the First Postgraduate CALS Conference, organised by the CALS Postgraduate Research Committee (in particular Bróna Murphy, Máiréad Moriarty, Íde O'Sullivan, Dagmar Reschke, and Shaun Nolan) and funded by CALS, took place in the Wood Room of Plassey House. The main aims of the event were:

- To provide CALS postgraduate students with an opportunity to receive feedback from fellow postgraduates, supervisors and other CALS members on their work.
- To create an open and sharing research environment among CALS postgraduates, supervisors and staff members from both UL and MIC.

The conference was opened by Dr. Eugene O'Brien, Assistant Dean of Research, who commended the effort to showcase CALS postgraduate research. The keynote speaker, Dr Muiris Ó Laoire (IRAAL and Institute of Technology, Tralee), presented a paper entitled "From Bilingualism to Multilingualism: Processing and Pedagogy". This was followed by three sessions of postgraduate presentations in which seven CALS postgraduates presented their research. Topics ranged from corpus analysis, minority language media and education policy to discursive strategies in expressing group identity in cinema and theatre. All three sessions were rounded up by a discussant who commented on the papers and chaired questions. The discussants were Dr. Anne O'Keefe (MIC), Prof. Alexandra Jaffe (University of California) and Martin Chappell (Head of LCS, UL). Lunch was held in the private dining room and added to the great sense of collegiality present during the day. The conference was closed by Prof. Angela Chambers, Director of CALS, who commented on the overall success of the event in terms of organisation and research.

Plans for the Second Postgraduate CALS Conference are already underway. Wednesday June 1st 2005 has been selected as the provisional date for this Conference. Due to interest expressed by associate members of CALS, this conference will be open to postgraduates recommended by these associate members from other institutions. In doing this, the Postgraduate Research Committee hopes that it can further fulfil the above stated aims of this project as well as reinforce its conference status by taking a step that will effectively make the Postgraduate CALS Conference a regional event.

Postgraduate Seminars 2003-2004

The CALS Postgraduate Seminar provides a forum where postgraduate students working on theses in the area of applied languages can exchange ideas, present their research, receive and give feedback, develop their critical skills and obtain practical help and advice with their research. The seminar met about once a fortnight over the course of the second semester in 2004.

A number of staff offered expert seminars, including CALS Associate Director, Dr. Jean Conacher, who presented a case study of the evolution of a language research project. In addition, outside speakers included Professor Gerhard Bach from the University of Bremen, who led an expert session on whole person language learning. Professor Bach's visit also enabled him to discuss future plans for UL's participation in the European Doctoral Network, which provides a forum for collaboration between researchers and postgraduate students in several European universities. (For further information contact Dr. Jean Conacher.)

In terms of postgraduate skills development, the focus of the postgraduate seminars this semester was on poster design and presentation. Increasingly, postgraduate students are being offered the opportunity to present their work visually in the form of a poster at major international conferences, something that presents a challenge to linguists who are more used to thinking about their work textually. The sessions were particularly useful to a number of postgraduates who were preparing posters for international conferences: Máiread Moriarty, whose poster, "The sociolinguistic effects of minority language media" was presented at the Sociolinguistics Symposium 15 in Newcastle; Shaun Nolan, who presented a poster entitled "The place of Gallo in education in Upper Brittany" at the same conference; and Íde O'Sullivan, whose poster entitled "'Good for unlearning errors': Learner reaction to Corpus consultation" was presented at EUROCALL 2004 at the University of Vienna in September 2004.

The Postgraduate Seminar will continue in the autumn, and the skills focus will be on academic writing. The seminars are hosted by CALS Research Scholar Dr. Helen Kelly-Holmes. Anyone interested in contributing to or taking part in the CALS Postgraduate Seminars, or wanting to join the mailing list for the seminars, should contact Helen Kelly-Holmes (Helen.Kelly.Holmes@ul.ie). Thanks to all postgraduate students and CALS staff who took part in the seminars in AY 2003-2004.

CALS Members

CALS currently has 38 members. Carolina Amador, David Atkinson, Gosia Barker, Marie-Thérèse Batardière, Brendan Bolger, Nuria Borrull, Angela Chambers, Martin Chappell, Jean Conacher, Fiona Farr, Barbara Geraghty, Liz Goold, Caroline Graham, Catherine Jeanneau, Rose Little, Michael McCarthy, Freda Mishan, Siobhán Murphy, Liam Murray, Maire Ní Neachtain, Joan O'Grady, Anne O'Keeffe, Nancy Serrano, Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin, Frédéric Royall.

Postgraduate researchers. Stephen Bearpark, Maria Palma Fahey, Triona Hourigan, Máiréad Moriarty, Bróna Murphy, Ornaith Ni Dhuibhir, Shaun Nolan, Bárbara Malvara Orfano, Íde O'Sullivan, Dagmar Reschke.

UL Research Scholar. Helen Kelly-Holmes

Associate Members of the Centre. Maeve Conrick, Department of French, NUI, Cork, Muiris Ó Laoire, Institute of Technology, Tralee.

Forthcoming Events

November: 24th Karen Corrigan (University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne), "Nineteenth Century Language Shift in Ireland: Totemization, Reification and Scapegoats." (Information from Dr. Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin).

January: IRAAL/CTF Conference
Organized by Meitheal Shochtheangeolaíócht na Gaeilge (the Irish sociolinguistics work-group); more information from Dr. Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin

February: 26th All Ireland Japanese Language Speech Contest (Information from Barbara Geraghty)

June: 16th - 18th Near Languages : (Collateral Languages 2) Conference Jointly organized by Dr. Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin and Jean-Michel Picard of LESCLaP. http://www.ul.ie/~lcs/Gaeilge/Collat2.htm