



Irish Translators' and Interpreters' Association  
Cumann Aistritheoirí agus Ateangairí na hÉireann

# ITIA Bulletin

2019 / 2

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## Editorial

In many previous issues the Bulletin has sought to look outwards in order to give readers and members an overall picture of current happenings in the world of translation and interpreting. So that a happy equilibrium is maintained, this issue is almost entirely dedicated to all things Irish.

Jenny Ní Mhaoileoin from An Coiste Téarmaíochta brings us on a comprehensive trip through the history of Irish terminology since the founding of the state and Máire Nic Mhaoláin sheds a bright light on translation from ‘small to small’ languages on these islands.

Please also note that our new subscription address is [itibulletin@group.io](mailto:itibulletin@group.io). We sincerely hope that Bulletin readers will find the changeover smooth and continue to enjoy reading it.

Anne Larchet, Editor

## An Coiste Téarmaíochta’s world class terminological database

Originally established under the Department of Education in 1927, an Coiste Téarmaíochta was for many years primarily focused on the school curriculum and on enabling the teaching and examination of subjects through Irish. While we still endeavour to meet the needs of the education system, over time we came to serve a much wider community and now provide a terminology service to Irish speakers across the world. Since 1999, an Coiste Téarmaíochta has operated as a department within Foras na Gaeilge, a cross-border body which holds primary responsibility for

the promotion and preservation of the Irish language.

The practice of terminology has undergone huge development in the past century and here in Ireland we have gone from handwritten index cards to one of the most advanced terminological databases in the world, established in partnership with Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge in DCU. Only recently redesigned, this database is found at [www.tearma.ie](http://www.tearma.ie) and contains over 185,000 entries. The website attracts visitors from across the globe and users made over 7.5 million searches in 2018. It is perhaps translators who most often seek our guidance but we also receive queries from journalists, educators, public servants and a broad range of individuals working or interested in a variety of subject areas.

The day to day business of an Coiste Téarmaíochta is carried out by a team of two, myself and the Príomhthéarmeolaí, or Chief Terminologist, Donncha Ó Cróinín. We respond to queries with interim recommendations and compile lists which are then discussed at meetings of an Coiste Stiúrtha, the Steering Committee. This committee is currently comprised of 27 voluntary members, who give their time freely to discuss and approve new terms at monthly meetings. The membership encompasses a broad cross-section of the Irish language community, including translators, journalists, lecturers and various ex-officio members representing a number of relevant institutions. Committee members serve for a period of three years and many have also served on sub-committees, dealing with terminology in specific areas of knowledge. The Irish language

exists in a challenging environment, however, where a paucity of resources results in terminology being developed on an ad hoc basis rather than via a more proactive approach. For the most part, we respond to terminological needs as they arise through queries, rather than being able to identify subject areas where terminology is under-developed and address them in a more methodical and comprehensive fashion. It is hoped, however, that in the near future we will again be able to turn our attention to such areas, so that they might be discussed in Irish with the same depth as in any other modern language.

To take you through the life cycle of a term, it generally begins with the receipt of an enquiry. Some queries - particularly those submitted by someone with considerable knowledge of the subject area - contain detailed information regarding the term, such as definitions, examples of contextual usage etc. However, more often than not, the first stage in the process is to research the term. In order to propose a term, I as a terminologist do not need to be an expert in the subject area but I do need to gain a reasonable understanding of the concept, so as to ensure my recommendation is not only logical but also, ideally, acceptable to those who are experts in that field. Research can present its own challenges, as you must learn to discern the reliable sources of information from those which are less reliable or authoritative.

Ideally, it is very useful to cultivate relationships with specialists in various fields, who will be willing to provide advice and information when a relevant query arises. For example, when determining the most appropriate name for a certain species, I have frequently consulted a very knowledgeable biologist who has advised an Coiste Téarmaíochta for many years. When trying to establish the etymology of complicated drug or chemical names, I have on numerous occasions consulted a pharmacist or even the makers of the drugs themselves. While the

definition of a term is generally the first thing you seek, etymology is also of vital importance as it can provide a deeper understanding of the term and its origins. When compiling lists to be discussed by an Coiste Stiúrtha, I also provide examples of contextual use where I deem it necessary to further clarify the term. A further piece of information sometimes provided is the term used in other languages, where this can be established to a reasonable degree of certainty. This often provides an interesting insight into the terminological practices followed in other languages, even in cases where it has been decided in those languages not to translate the term at all. I have found such information particularly useful with regard to the aforementioned species names of plants and animals.

How you come to recommend a term depends primarily on the nature of the term in the source language i.e. is the term based on existing concepts in either the target or source language or is it based on a third language or even, on occasion, on an invented language such as that used in chemical names. Existing native terms are used where possible, sometimes giving them a new meaning, or simply an extended meaning. A term such as blood moon or 'gealach na fola', for example, is relatively simple as it merely requires the combination of existing words and concepts. However, if we take the term amblyopia, which relates to an eye condition, the English term is actually a combination of Greek roots. One could attempt to translate it using traditional native words but the end result would simply be a definition of the term rather than a translation of the term itself. Therefore, in cases such as these, where the meaning of the term lies hidden in third-language roots, a policy of transliteration is followed. This involves imposing Irish orthography and grammar, according to established rules and principles (rest assured, there is more to the process than simply adding a síneadh fada here and there!). Thus amblyopia

becomes aimblióipe, a feminine word in the fourth declension. Those unfamiliar with terminological practices and the logic behind them may criticize such translations as 'Béarlachas', believing their similarity to the target language to herald the impending demise of our native tongue. In reality, though, it would be nonsensical to attempt to use native words in such cases and would be in no way helpful to either native speakers or learners of the language.

Furthermore, a cursory glance at other European languages reveals a common approach, in French we have l'amblyopie, in Spanish la ambliopía and in Danish amblyopi.

We endeavour to make an interim recommendation within 24 hours, though it can take longer if a term is particularly tricky or requires further consultation with subject experts. This initial recommendation will then either be accepted or amended by an Coiste Stiúrtha at the monthly meeting, before being registered in our online database at [www.tearma.ie](http://www.tearma.ie), which is freely available to the public. Where an initial recommendation has been amended, this is also communicated to the initial correspondent.

This is but a general overview of our work and should anyone wish to seek further information, I may be contacted at [jnimhaoileoin@forasnagaeilge.ie](mailto:jnimhaoileoin@forasnagaeilge.ie) and will happily answer any questions and welcome any feedback.

Jenny Ní Mhaoileoin

## Members' Corner

*Moze Jacobs, ITIA's only English/Dutch PM shows how translators have and need to have many strings to their bow.*

### **Describe yourself professionally in a few lines.**

While my day (and/or night) job is as a Dutch-English/English-Dutch translator, fiction writing combined with environmental journalism is my

dream job. After translating full-time for almost 20 years I was spreading myself too thinly. Luckily, I was able to drastically reduce my translation workload late last year, due to sweeping changes in my personal life. My work/life balance has improved and I have become more of a digital nomad. A welcome side effect is that most deadlines are set well in advance whereas 'being ambushed' by offers I felt I couldn't refuse was a problem in the past. The clients I have retained are few but the relationships tend to be long term – I believe in 'going the extra mile'. Among them a financial research company (since 2004) and two music festivals (since 2007 and 2014, respectively) plus some artists and composers.

### **When and why did you decide on a career in translating?**

*An actual career has never been high on my list. The term suggests a ruthless climb up the ladder of power as part of a social hierarchy whereas I prefer to be a footloose freelancer.*

An actual career has never been high on my list. The term suggests a ruthless climb up the ladder of power as part of a social hierarchy whereas I prefer to be a footloose freelancer (sometimes on a contract basis). It suits me. The downside is a lack of security. Before moving to Ireland in 1997, while active as a (music) journalist/fiction writer, it was sometimes hard to make ends meet. The work tended to be time-consuming. As he looked at the tax returns one day, my accountant remarked that quite a few of his clients – mostly authors and journalists – were translating 'romance books' under pseudonym as a sideline to help pay the bills. "I can do that," I thought as the English language had ensconced itself in my brain when I had to learn how to speak it at an English primary school aged 10, having been thrown in at the deep end. I applied for a test translation on the assumption it would be a piece of cake. It came with a long list of instructions. My

handiwork was almost rejected when I ignored most of them (the writing was a bit silly) but I was allowed to revise the test and was accepted eventually. That was the start of a successful career, of sorts, as a part-time translator of romantic/steamy novels. The work was badly paid and involved serious abridging as the texts needed to be shortened by approximately 10% (Dutch is more verbose than English). The latter was something I balked at initially but after a while I could do it almost automatically (a description here, unnecessary dialogue there) and it gave me a false sense of editorial control.

It was far from typical translation work, I now realise, and not just in terms of content (some of the series feature fairly explicit erotic scenes). I kept using these books as a kind of financial safety valve even when I was already doing far more heavy-duty (and better remunerated) translations, mainly for agencies. I can no longer bring myself to do it but the question how closely the end result should resemble the original text continues to be relevant. The answer differs per client and sometimes for each text (the translation of a contract requires detailed adherence to the source whereas a PR campaign for the same company will only work if it reads well).

**Name the most important thing you did that helped you launch your career.**

The internet. An advertisement in the local paper did nothing but I found many clients online or they found me through job lists or profiles. Although I came across my first 'serious' client – an American translation agency in Galway – via an ad in the Irish Times but that was at the end of the 1990s when the 'real world' and online activities were far less integrated. I went all the way up to Galway by bus from West Cork to shake hands with the PM and get a tour of the company! That wouldn't have happened even a few years later. I have worked in a 'virtual office' for 15 years alongside a German colleague in France. We chat sometimes – especially when something

goes wrong – but have never met in person. It still feels as if I know her and can trust her, which is quite weird if you think about it but in a positive way. The large – and expanding – information resources that are available online are another positive. I love research.

**Do you think it is necessary to specialise?**

That partly depends on your mindset. The advantage is that it is possible to work faster once one is well-acquainted with a certain idiom/environment. The potential disadvantages are boredom and/or becoming too dependent on certain clients/sectors. I had a can-do attitude and was inclined to accept many of the assignments that came my way in the past, whatever their nature (with the exception of glyphosate, which is an evil substance). The content was very wide-ranging: Fashion, medical equipment, hairbrushes, motorcycles in Japlish, politics, Venice Biennale, marriage certificates, subtitles,

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*I had a can-do attitude and was inclined to accept many of the assignments that came my way in the past, whatever their nature (with the exception of glyphosate, which is an evil substance)*

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automotive error codes, ethics campaigns, agricultural machinery, pizza labels .... However, every linguistic domain you enter has its own terminology and the searches can be very time-consuming so I am happy to focus on just a few areas. But it has been very informative. I also did a large number of Dutch (oral and written) language tests for major multinational companies (via a very pleasant translation agency). This entailed having intense 12-minute conversations with strangers from around the world to gauge their ability to use language as a tool to provide services to other strangers. That, too, is a specialism but within this lies a wealth of real-life experience.

**What have been favourite assignments?**

They include a dispatch written by an eyewitness

to the Battle of the Boyne on 24 July 1690. Military manoeuvres do not interest me much but there was a certain thrill in the realisation that the writer (an envoy) was describing what he had just seen with his own eyes all those centuries ago. Almost a fly-on-the-wall experience; a 17th century Netflix documentary (or travelling back in time). In addition, I like working with artists or composer and/or writers who operate in these areas they tend to be very particular in their choice of words and to care deeply about form, content, and language. An interesting assignment has been a series of composer monographs for the annual November Music Festival in the Netherlands. And last but not least an article by Leo van der Markt about the Uccello paintings by Ton van Os, which was fiendishly difficult to translate but made me feel, once the thorny translation issues had been resolved, that I had learned something essential about the universe.

### **What is the best/worst thing about being a translator?**

The worst are deadlines when you need them least (for example, at your son's wedding).

The best moment is that sigh of relief after meeting a deadline. Free at last (for now)!

### **What advice would you give someone thinking of embarking on a career as a translator?**

If you are looking for additional work, take a good look at the services sector, which continues to expand. Assessors are often required. Or you may be able to identify other needs and missing links in your language (e.g. localisation of tests and other materials) by talking to someone at HR.

*Moze Jacobs has been a freelance translator, editor, Dutch language assessor in Ireland since 1998. Her main languages are English and Dutch. She worked as a journalist in Amsterdam before migrating and is also a writer. A graphic novel, Terra to Titan, about a 24th century female astronaut (with visual*

*artist Hanneke van der Hoeven) will be published in Dutch and English on June 21st 2019 by Uitgeverij In de Knipscheer (Haarlem). She co-organises Bespoken Word sessions in Clonakilty.*

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*Máire Nic Mhaoláin, former ITIA Chair, well renowned for her work in An Gúm, and particularly well known for her translation of Harry Potter's 'The Philosopher's Stone' into Irish, shines a light on smaller languages*

## **Translating between 'small' languages - a personal experience**

Is there a difference between translating from one major language to another and translating between minor languages, or between major and minor, or vice versa? I have translated to varying extents into Irish from French, Italian, Latin, Welsh, and occasionally English. That sounds like a lot of major-to-minor, not to mention the category 'ancient-to-modern', but I've had some minor-to-minor experience too, in my case with Welsh to Irish.

For a bit of background, Irish and Welsh are Celtic languages, and belong to a branch of Indo-European once widespread over huge swathes of western and central Europe and spoken as far south as Iberia and ancient Galatia in Asia Minor. But as Latin and the Germanic languages spread Celtic declined, and in modern times, despite official recognition for Irish and Welsh, community use of Celtic languages is confined to a few regions of Ireland, Britain, and Brittany in northwest France.

Celtic has two branches. Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Manx (now being revived on the Isle of Man, where they've recently translated Casino Royale) are closely related and termed Q-Celtic. Welsh, Breton, and Cornish

(now being revived in Cornwall) form the P-Celtic group, being closely related to one another and more distantly related to the Q-Celtic group. 'Five' is cúig in Irish and pump in Welsh, for example.

Let me say at once that Irish and Welsh, though related, are far from being mutually intelligible. There is an underlying correspondence in syntax and grammatical features, but that's about it. Sentences begin with the verb, nouns have two genders, adjectives follow their nouns; there is no indefinite article; and both languages feature initial mutation, in roughly the same circumstances, but differently. Where written Irish keeps the original initial and shows the mutation as well, Welsh will show only the resultant mutated form. For example, if 'horse' is capall in Irish and ceffyl in Welsh, 'my horse' is mo chapall in Irish but fy ngheffyl in Welsh. Etymological connections can be buried deep, and further obscured by two widely varying orthographies. Yes, capall is a bit like ceffyl, but only because they are both from Latin. The visual impact is very different too. The letters w and y, for instance, are not found in normal Irish but proliferate in Welsh, often side by side (as in gwyrth, cywir), and in the accented forms wŷ and ŷy.

A further refinement of Welsh spelling is the use of digraphs, whereby ch, dd, ff, ng, ll, ph, rh, th are considered single entities when determining word order in the dictionary. Initial ch, ff, ll, and rh have (or had in those days) separate sections in the dictionary from words beginning with simple c, f, l, or r. Add in possible initial mutations, and finding new words in the dictionary could be hell. I once met a scholar who had devised an algorithm to predict 'pretty accurately' the 'real initial' of Welsh words. I often wish I'd got his number. Both Irish and Welsh are increasingly influenced by English vocabulary — Welsh

more so, given its geographical position. (I once spent ages scouring the dictionary for o diar before realising it was just 'Oh dear!')

Irish-language organisations and agencies have often looked to the achievements of the Welsh in preserving their linguistic heritage. I had studied the Celtic languages at university in Belfast, and later on, realising the particular dearth of reading material for teenagers in Irish, was moved to attempt translating something from Welsh. So, with little or no acquaintance with the Welsh literary scene, I chose a juvenile novel more or less at random, and set to work.

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*Irish readers may presume the uncle disapproved of the friendship, whereas in Welsh he was merely amused at the give-away use of the pronoun.*

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The essentially rural setting for my first novel was not very different from its Irish counterpart, and in those pre-digital days there wasn't much technology to be translated. Phones were answered in Welsh (or Irish) with 'Hello! Carnan 392.' I had decided to relocate the action of the story to Ireland, changing personal names and place names (invented) accordingly. I kept one Welsh name, however, for a visiting artist, turning him at once into an exotic Welshman. Welsh has an informal (singular) and a formal (or plural) form for 'you'. My young Welsh characters used the plural pronoun to grown-ups, etc, and the singular to family and friends. Everybody uses the singular in Irish. (An old honorific plural is occasionally used when addressing a clergyman). In the Welsh, a new boyfriend was overheard arranging a date with the heroine, in the singular! Her uncle remarked that for two people who had allegedly just recently met they were very pally. The heroine rushed to claim (in the Irish) that nobody worried about 'things like

that' any more. Irish readers may presume the uncle disapproved of the friendship, whereas in Welsh he was merely amused at the give-away use of the pronoun.

Welsh expletives, at least in print, seem rather mild. In informal Irish, on the other hand, one may freely invoke the deity or saints with a confident familiarity. At one point the heroine, fearing to be late home, exclaims in Irish Ó, a Mhaighdean Bheannaithe, caithfidh mé imeacht!' ('Oh, Blessed Virgin, I have to go!') Whatever she said in Welsh, that wasn't it.

Though not commissioned, that first translation won a small award and was accepted by the publishing house where I worked, finally appearing in 1989. Dizzy with success, I had meanwhile undertaken to translate a second novel by the same author, Mair Wynn Hughes. From a different publisher, this one actually appeared before the previous one, in 1986. I left the story in its original setting, where all the Welsh names and passing references to 'rugby' and 'open prison', added a degree of foreignness at the time to the Irish version.

Later on, I was invited to translate a little story by Bob Eynon, about a group of Welsh children on a school trip to Spain. That came out in 1994. Then I translated two short novels by the same author, featuring the detective Debra Craig fighting crime in Spain and California. These all had built-in foreignness, so no relocation was attempted. Published in 1994 and 1996, they were originally written for adult learners of Welsh, with simple language and grammar, which I tried to reflect in the Irish versions.

It is a while since I've translated any Welsh. Translations from Welsh to Irish do appear sporadically, but it remains the case that such translations at any level are rare indeed.

Máire Nic Mhaoláin

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## Snippets

### **Springboard+ opportunity to Study for Graduate Certificate in Translation Technology at Dublin City University.**

Are you interested in training in translation technology? Perhaps you've been working as a translator or in the translation industry for some time. You know about what's happening in translation memory and machine translation and you'd like to find out more. Or perhaps you're interested in working in this area and you'd like to explore the possibilities. If so, Springboard+ could be what you're looking for.

What is Springboard+? Springboard+ is funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund and the scheme now provides funding for people who are interested in upskilling in the area of translation technology. The graduate certificate in translation technology starts in September 2019 and ends the following May. You may be eligible if you are a returner (homemaker), in employment, unemployed or formerly self-employed. The course is free except for people who are in employment who pay a 10% contribution to fees. Check [springboardcourses.ie](http://springboardcourses.ie) for exact terms and conditions.

What is the Graduate Certificate in Translation Technology? This certificate course consists of four modules taught at Dublin City University:

- Translation Technology,
- Computerised Terminology,
- Translation Theory



### - Career Transitions and Success

Lectures take place at DCU Glasnevin Campus from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. two evenings per week, with three afternoons being required on occasion.

If you are interested in this course, you will need an honours grade (2.2 or higher) in any undergraduate discipline. You must have knowledge of a second language. If you don't have a primary degree, but have worked in the translation industry, you may be eligible under recognition of prior learning. If you are a non-native speaker of English, you will have to provide evidence of your knowledge of English e.g. IELTS 7 points, Cambridge Proficiency Pass or TOEFL 600 points (paper based test) or 250 points (computer based).

Those who complete the graduate certificate may be eligible to return to DCU and add on modules to obtain the MSc in Translation Technology.

For further details, please see:

<https://springboardcourses.ie/details/7064>

### CPD

ITIA hosted a workshop on Financial Translation on 24th May given by PM Tara Russell, who imparted a large part of her 20 years experience in the field. The session was very well attended and those who didn't already know learnt how vast the field of 'Financial Translation' in fact is - audits, management reports, banking, balance sheets, taxation etc all very specific fields within the world of finance. Getting to grips with the language and terminology of each of these areas requires a lot of time for in-depth research.

Of great value was the section on resources, both online and print, and we learnt that there is no need to reinvent the wheel - there are so many sources of formats and terminology already out there. Participants got the

opportunity to study different documents and even attempt some translation.

Tara shared her experience on dealing with clients and even touched on the minefield of rates.

The workshop came about from discussions at the last ITIA AGM in October, where it was agreed that within our own membership we have many specialists who can be of immense benefit to our members and any other professionals who wish to continue to learn. Certainly, this CPD event demonstrated that, in spades.

## What's Hot, What's Not

### What's HOT...

At an Experience Japan festival in Farmleigh, we learnt that stories collected by Lafcadio Hearn in Japan have been translated into Irish. The festival featured the launch of a bilingual collection of them, translated by Pádraig MacCearáin and illustrated by Clare Okua McCay. The languages involved are Ireland's first and second official ones. But via its title, at least, the collection (available now through Connradh na Gaeilge) gives Japanese the last word: "Sayonara".

### ...What's NOT

Cork County Council was heavily criticised by the State's official Language Commissioner for using Google Translate to produce the Irish language version of static content on its website. Maybe Cork CC would consider brushing up on their cúpla focal!

## Worth-A-Click

*Finally, employers, in this case Amazon, recognising Sign Language for employees and hopefully setting the standard.*

<https://tinyurl.com/y4yjc4v2>

*A dedicated unit of the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO) responsible for developing and publishing international standards, has set a new ISO standard for legal interpreting.*

<https://tinyurl.com/y4x58fre>

*Ireland and UK are not the only European countries to suffer from interpreting service tenders going to the lowest bidders - with resulting lower hourly rates.*

<https://tinyurl.com/y3geyryb>

*Full details of Cork CC's translation gaffe.*

<https://tinyurl.com/y26k438u>

*And of a translation of Lafcadio Hearn's work.*

<https://tinyurl.com/y5ehu65s>

## New ITIA Members Jan - Mar 2019

### New ITIA Associate Members

#### Laura Noonan

German - English

#### Nicholas Bennett

Japanese - English

#### Rachel Donnelly

German - English

#### Lisa O'Connor

French - English

#### Máire Nic Mheanman

Irish - English

English - Irish

## Joining the ITIA

The Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association is pleased to welcome new members to the association. We currently have the following categories of membership:

- Professional
- Associate
- Student
- Honorary

**Professional Membership** is awarded to translators or interpreters who meet the strict criteria of the ITIA based on qualification and level of experience.

Applicants must also achieve a PASS in the annual Professional Membership Examination (translator or interpreter) set by the ITIA.

**Associate Membership** may be granted to holders of a third-level qualification in translation and/or interpreting and/or languages or to holders of a third-level qualification with relevant experience.

**Student Membership** is available to persons undertaking undergraduate studies in any discipline or those undertaking postgraduate studies in translation or interpreting.

**Honorary Membership** is awarded by the ITIA Executive Committee to persons in Ireland or abroad who have distinguished themselves in the field of translation or interpreting.

## Contacting the ITIA

### Irish Translators' & Interpreters' Association

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### ITIA Bulletin

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