



Three Leaps of Faith and Four Giant Steps: Developing Interpreter Training in Ireland

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Some Background: Ireland

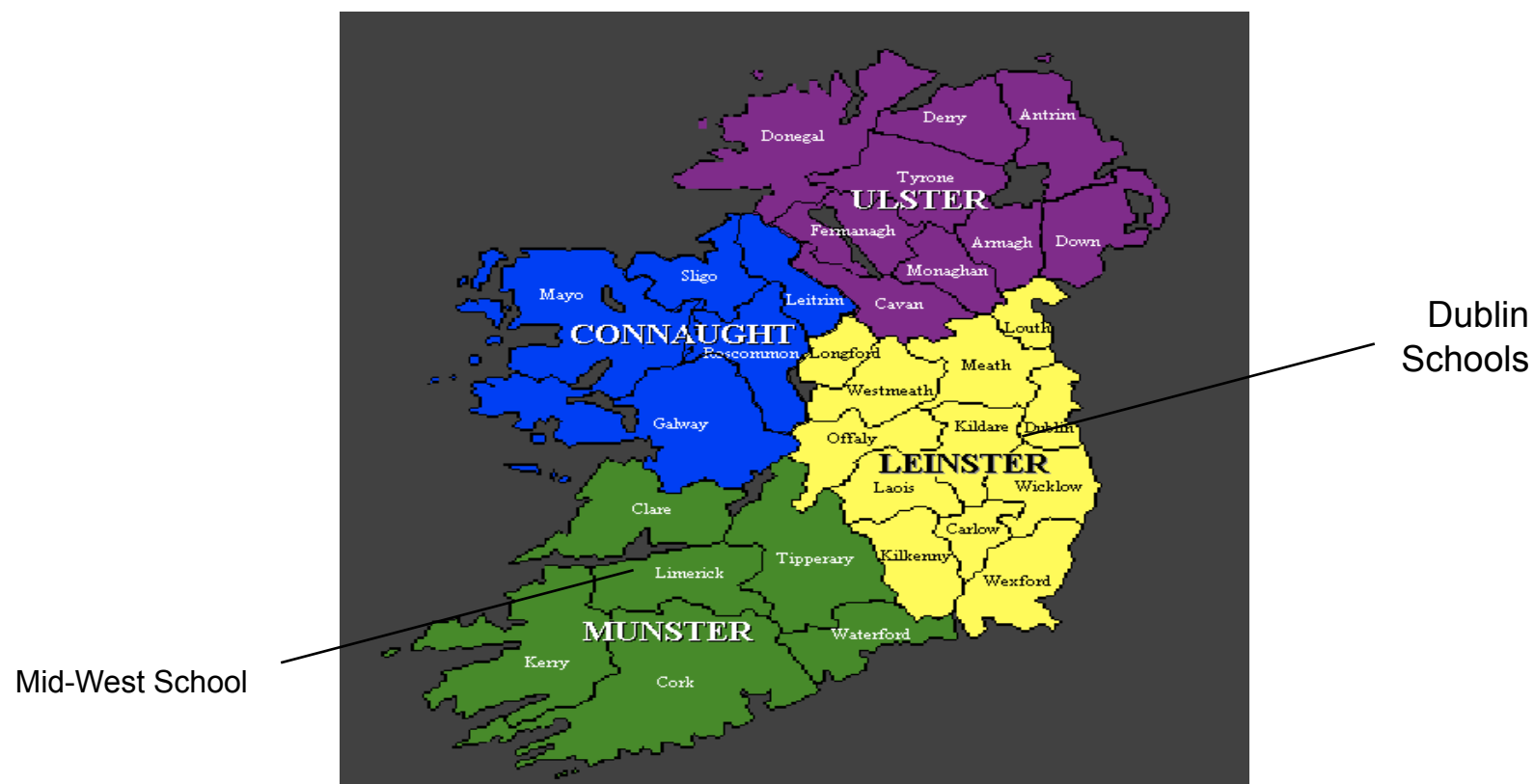


- Most westerly state in EU
- Irish Sign Language (ISL) indigenous SL - not officially recognized in Republic of Ireland despite EU (1988, 1998) and Council of Europe resolutions (2003, 2005).
- Historical link to LSF
- Some 5,000 sign language users
- Currently approx. 50 interpreters, giving ratio of 1:100 ISL users. (Finland 1: 10, UK 1: 140)



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Ireland





The 3 Leaps of Faith

1. Establishment of the Irish Deaf Society (1983)

2. IASLI - the birth of a profession (1993-2007)

- Currently no SLI professional organisation, but many are members of ITIA.

3. Establishing the First Interpreting Agency (Sign Link (1997-2007))

- Registration/ assessment/ training
- Other agencies now established.



The 1980s & SLIs in Ireland

- In 1981, EU Year of Disabled People, NUI Maynooth offered Deaf people scholarships to the university.
- They couldn't take up those places due to the complete lack of professional interpreting services.
- This situation continued until 1994 when the first ISL/English interpreters graduated from the EU Horizon Programme funded programme (TCD-Uni of Bristol)
- EU funding as crucial lynch-pin to establishing SLI training and services (1992-4, 1998-9).



Our Four Giant Steps

- **Step 1: HORIZON I (1992-4)**
 - Trinity College Dublin (IRE), University of Bristol (UK) & Irish Deaf Society
- **Step 2: The SLIDE Program (1994)**
 - National Association for the Deaf (IRE), Royal National Institute for the Deaf (UK)
- **Step 3: Cork: The European Union Goes South!**
 - NUI Cork (IRE), University of Bristol (UK) & Cork Deaf Enterprises (IRE)
- **Step 4: CDS- A Home for Deaf Studies at TCD**



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- Established 2001
- 3 Undergraduate diplomas
 - Deaf Studies
 - ISL/English Interpreting
 - ISL Teaching
- From 2009, 4 year degrees in these domains, with e-learning content (SIF II)
- Research mandate
- Deaf:hearing ratio of full-time academic staff 3:1
- Many graduates are now lecturers, having completed postgraduate training in cognate fields.





Interpreting in Practice

- Professional registration is problematic: no statutory basis at present.
- Training needs to be rolled out nationally - SIF II - & made accessible to Deaf students too.
- Currently looking at accreditation of TCD degree by the UK's CACDP.
 - This links to statutory registration and accreditation in UK and to formal recognition of BSL and ISL in Northern Ireland: As BSL/English public service interpreters in NI are registered, so too should ISL/English interpreters.
- Deaf interpreters - a new development.



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SIF II

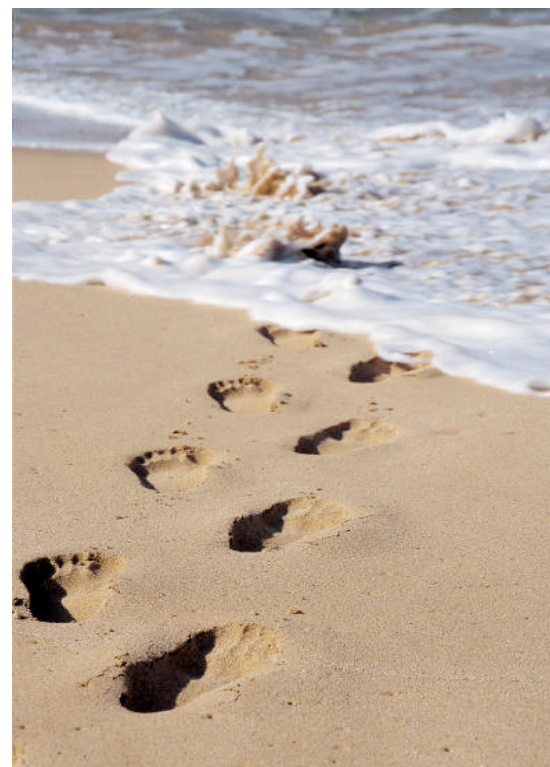
- Strategic Innovation Funds (Cycle II)
- Project worth €2.4 Million (approx. \$3m)
- Working with Blanchardstown Institute of Technology to roll out 4 year honours blended learning degree (BA in Deaf Studies)
- Collaborating with NUI Cork, Limerick Institute of Technology & Tipperary Institute
- Innovative use of new technologies to bridge barriers to access.





Training: Footprints in the Sand...

- Since 1964 in the USA & since the early 1970s across Europe, with Sweden beginning in the late 1960s
- Since 1992 in Ireland - sporadic until 2001
- No harmonization of SLI training across the EU
- Some mapping of language learning to CEFRL
- Need for European Framework of Core Competencies for Interpreters?





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‘A lot done, more to do...’

- Modern rhetoric re: inclusion & full participation falls short in practice still.
- For ISL users: lack of formal recognitions and/ or protections afforded to them as SL users in Ireland;
 - Even where there are legal provisions, practice does not always follow as we’d like it to;
 - Provisions are generally ad-hoc in nature. Funding streams are provided on a good will basis;
 - Interpreting provision seen as “the solution”: in reality, it is part of the solution, but not the complete answer.