



hosted by **FRYSKE**  **AKADEMY**

EXPLANATORY REPORT EUROPEAN EXPERT SEMINAR 2012 Agreement 2012

Social Media and Lesser Used Languages

28th-30th of November 2012

Venue: Fryske Akademy / it Aljemint, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden



**EUSKO JAURLARITZA
GOBIERNO VASCO**

Index

Explanatory Report of the Expert Seminar 2012..... 3
Wednesday 28th of November 2012 3
Thursday 29th of November 2012 4
Friday 29th of November 2012 18
Lessons and conclusions..... 28
Finances 2012 European Expert Seminar..... **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.**

Social Media and Lesser Used Languages

28th-30th of November 2012

Venue: Fryske Akademy / it Aljemint

Ljouwert/Leeuwarden

Explanatory Report of the Expert Seminar 2012

The theme of the 2012 expert seminar, 'Social Media and Lesser Used Languages', was decided upon in dialogue by the Basque Ministry of Education and the Mercator Research Centre. Experts from all over Europe were invited to speak at the seminar. The experts had a diverse background, but all have an interest in the topic. In total fourteen outstanding academic European researcher speakers were invited to make a valuable contribution to the seminar and give a presentation on one of the following topics:

- Social media in a multilingual context
- Social media and language identity
- Chances or risks of social media for lesser used languages
- Opportunities and challenges of social media for language learning
- Use of social media in the multilingual classroom

Besides the fourteen presentations, there were four workshop leaders that put the theory on social media and lesser used languages into practise by providing workshops on practical issues related to social media and lesser used languages. Several other experts, policy makers and language teachers were invited to contribute their knowledge in the discussions.

Wednesday 28th of November 2012

On this day of arrival there was an informal get-together with drinks and a buffet for the early arrivers at the Fryske Akademy / it Aljemint. The next day the formal opening took place at the seminar venue it Aljemint.

Thursday 29th of November 2012

On the 29th of November the formal opening took place. During the day several invited speakers held their presentation and two workshops took place in the afternoon.

Seminar opening

Reinier Salverda, director of the Fryske Akademy, welcomed all guests and gave his thanks for visiting the Fryske Akademy during this 6th expert Seminar organised by The Mercator Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (part of the Fryske Akademy). This year it's also the 25th anniversary of Mercator. He introduced speaker Jannewietske de Vries, deputy of Culture of the Province of Fryslân. Salverda explained that the province of Fryslân is a strong supporter of Mercator and the Fryske Akademy and that Jannewietske de Vries was elected as president of the NPLD a few weeks earlier. Jannewietske de Vries opened the seminar and wished everybody a good morning. She was glad to see the guests from all over Europe, young and old. Fryslân has a tactical position, geographical as well as the activities that were concerned here. She was elected for president of the NPLD for 3 years a few weeks ago. A Master in Multilingualism will start in Leeuwarden in September 2013. The province is actively supporting this Master. De Vries further said she was looking forward to the results of the seminar and wished all participants great fun and success. Reinier Salverda thanked her for opening.



Cor van der Meer, project manager of Mercator took over from Salverda from this point on. He welcomed the guests and introduced himself as the chairman for this morning. He introduced Itxaso Bernaola Arriortua from the Basque Country, representing the Basque delegation. Itxaso Bernaola Arriortua said it was a pleasure and an honour to be with the Basque delegation at the Fryske Akademy. She wished everyone good luck with the aims of the seminar and ended with: “tigel tank / eskerrik asko / thank you”.

Presentation 1: Daniel Cunliff – “The use of the Welsh language on Twitter”

Daniel Cunliff’s presentation introduced the results of a survey into the use of the Welsh language on twitter. Goal of this research is to gain insight in language maintenance and revitalisation. The use of minority language is declining and the question is whether social media can help to obstruct this process. In this research Cunliff directs at how the language is used on twitter (presence/form), why the Welsh language is used on twitter (expectations, motives) and formulates the so what-question, on the effect of the use of the Welsh language on twitter on behalf of the attitude or status. Four research questions are formulated:

1. What expectations do the respondents have when it comes to the use of the Welsh language on Twitter?
2. What influences the choice on who to follow on Twitter?
3. How do they find Welsh content on Twitter?
4. What drives the choice for a language of a tweet?



Before Cunliff came to the results, he explains the methodology of the research. Results are gathered by an online questionnaire, published via Twitter among people who use Twitter and speak Welsh. In total, 286 respondents completed the online questionnaire.

In total there are 3000 accounts that use Welsh on twitter. That means that in this research about 10% is covered. The limitations are that it is a small sample, and that it is not known how many

Welsh speakers use twitter. One of the questions that is proposed to the respondents is the reason for using Twitter. The main reasons were: to connect with each other, curiosity, to share information, business related, peer pressure. Only 4,7% of the respondents mentioned 'the Welsh community' as a reason for using Twitter. This means that active language activism is not very much found. The language is normal for them. This also explains why the majority of the respondents expect both reading and writing of Welsh on Twitter. The relationship amongst people on Twitter is non-symmetric. In the research people are asked whether the use of the Welsh language by another person on Twitter influences their choice on who to follow. 60% says that the language that is used has a positive influence on the choice of who to follow. 32.9% says it's much more likely to follow a person on Twitter if this person tweets in Welsh. The conclusion is that the choice on who to follow on Twitter is partly influenced by the language they use and not only on the content they have tweeted about. The network is the best way to find other Welsh-tweeting people. The observation of this research is that the use of the Welsh language on Twitter is normalised. The Twitter network is partly shaped by language. People are also aware of this shaping. Besides, Twitter is used frequently and is easy to use.

Presentation 2: Garbiñe Bereziartua Etxeberria – “Basque speaking adolescents and their literacy skills in and out of school”

This presentation was about the literacy skills of adolescents in and out of schools. Research was done in the region of Azpeiri. 88.6% of the population is active bilingual. It is one of the most Basque speaking villages. Bereziartua Etxeberria distinguishes 3 levels that contain factors that influence the use of language by adolescents:

- 1 - individual level (environment/behaviour)
- 2 - microsocial level (rules/habits)
- 3 - macrosocial level (society/political)



The research includes the following research questions:

1. WHAT/HOW MUCH

2. WHY (Basque/Spain)
3. HOW (Characteristics of the Basque they write)

The sample within this research has been executed in 3 schools, with students in the age range of 14-16 years old. In total 300 students participated in the research. Data is collected in several ways. The data collection tools relate to the different research questions. The what/how much question has been examined by a questionnaire and a language diary in which the students keep track of the language use on different activities. The why question is examined by focus group sessions and individual interviews with teachers. Results show that most of the students are more comfortable in Basque (88%). They also think in Basque (88%) and most of the personal relations are dealt with in Basque (75%). The reasons for language use can also be divided into the three levels. On the individual level, the origin of the family and home input influence on the language that is used. On micro-social level, they found that Spanish is mostly used for joking, because the language is cooler and because of the lack of Basque resources. On macro-social level language use is as follows: TV/films mainly in Spanish, music in Basque, Spanish and English and reading is done in Spanish. Technology and social network: the adolescents use different languages for different purposes. Basque is mostly used in social network, SMS, telephone and radio. Spain is mostly used on internet searching, PSP, websites and TV/film. 97% of the adolescents in this research use social media. There are differences in the use of social media between the sexes in the frequency, content and form of the use of the social media.

Presentation 3: Kike Amonarriz Gorria – “Basque of the XXI century: How things are changing, pals!”



In the Basque Country, the opinion in the 70s was that it was sufficient if children learn Basque at school. However, this is not the case. Children only used Basque at school, not at home or outside. In the 80s people didn't find Basque a 'funny' language, people were not used to telling jokes in Basque. In recent years, there are new domains for use of language, like social media. One of the new applications where language becomes visible is the dictionary on mobile phones. For Basque, this

was implemented in 2003. Also, MHLZ (hosted by Amonarriz Gorria) a television quiz started in which the Basque language is used in a fun and playful way. With the use of the social media, Basque is used in more informal ways. However, usually mixed codes of Basque and Spanish (Euskara) are used. Also, the spelling in Basque is written as it is spoken. There is also more use of icons and abbreviations. It could be argued that the quality of the standard form – Batua – is diminished by these mixed forms. As a result of this language use and mixing, new sociolinguistic typologies are identified. There are 8 categories, ranging from anti-Basque to strongly pro-Basque on a continuum. The use of dialects is emphasised in different ways across this continuum. For instance, the pro-Basque group thinks Basque will only survive by using Batua, so dialect should not be used. Concerning the use of dialects and mixing, there are different reasons for applying these in conversation (by youngsters). Some people use Euskara because of the lack of ability to speak a complete Basque sentence. It could also be laziness. It is now also evolving more in the street language for young people. Dialects are seen as tools for expressivity and seem to replace slang. The current revival of dialects is to be found in the topics of nearness, authenticity and intimacy. Where the focus of language teaching used to be on the linguistic quality as being the correctness of the language, now more suitability objectives are included. Suitability should be prioritised in the educational system, where linguistic creativity is promoted.

Presentation 4: Katerina Zourou – “Social media and language learning: beliefs, attitudes and uses in Latvia, Poland and Romania”

In the LLP network ‘Language learning and social media’, 6 dimensions are composed. This presentation considers the 3rd dimension, including research in three new EU-countries: Latvia, Poland and Romania. The starting point of the research is that there were no recent studies on social media attitudes, beliefs and uses.



The research follows a mixed method approach, with desk top research, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The desk top research revealed that IT grows fast in households and schools. Especially in Romania, there is a dramatic change in the IT availability in the home. For all countries,

there are big intergenerational gaps (with young people using much more IT). Most social media was 'consumed' or 'consulted', more than there was creation. This also yields for languages; social media is used as a receptive mode, less as a space of production (for both languages). The structured interviews revealed that personal interest drives the use of social media. People don't have clear ideas about web 2.0, everything is 'internet'. Also, internet (web 2.0) is seen as natural. Limitations of the research: small sample size (n=60) and all participants were foreign language students, which are likely to be more open to language and communication in general. In general, internet is seen as a versatile tool for work, learning and communication. There is a positive attitude towards internet and social media as language learning tools. This means that they could be implemented in educational contexts.

Further steps: open up research to other age groups (this study was performed with young people) and persons with negative attitudes towards using social media. Here, a more qualitative approach could work in identifying why these people have negative beliefs and attitudes.

Presentation 5: Sarah McMonagle – “Sustaining lesser-used languages through social media. From international standards to grassroots creativity: where does research go from here?”

Sarah McMonagle from the University of Hamburg gave a presentation entitled: “Sustaining lesser-used languages through social media. From international standards to grassroots creativity: where does research go from here?”. McMonagle started by posing a question to the audience: are international standards and grassroots creativity both needed? Since McMonagle had no data available to present (she had just collected data in November which has not been analysed yet), her presentation discussed methodological and ethnic questions involved in research on social media. In her presentation she proposed to combine all talks and topics of the seminar and ask ourselves the question whether our research matters. Another question that was posed is how social media can be researched. After all, social media offer different research terrains with immense opportunities but also quite a lot of challenges.



McMonagle's research at the University of Hamburg is linked to sustainability and language endangerment. She argues that sustainability is closely linked to language diversity. Using technology in language preservation is not new but it ought to be understood in the context of the globalisation of communications within which social media comes to the fore. For researchers and policymakers, this represents a substantial shift in the ways language vitality may be measured and assessed. Whereas international organisations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe established standards for the protection and promotion of lesser-used languages, no such standards or directives exist in the world of social media which is created and controlled from the grassroots. Internet provides a facilitating dominant language and at the same time, it opens opportunities for minority languages. Research has shown that English is the most used language on the internet but Europeans prefer to have access to their own language. The research does not reveal which languages Europeans would prefer but nevertheless there is a desire for language diversity on the web. UNESCO would like to see science getting more involved in social media. One of the factors that was mentioned in the Language Vitality and Endangerment document of UNESCO, is the response to new domains and media, in other words: how can social media be integrated? Research involving social media knows a few advantages: the data is already transcribed which is a huge timesaver and there is no observer-paradox. However, there are also challenges or opportunities like a point of tension between the ease of data-collection and the ethnic situation. To what extent can public internet data be used without asking for permission? Can researchers use data published on for example Twitter or Facebook? These are questions that are yet unanswered but have to be taken into consideration for future research, especially since this type of research is rising.

Presentation 6: Juan Pablo Martínez Cortés – “Opportunities, risks and challenges of social media for (very) endangered languages: the case of Aragonese”

Juan Pablo Martínez Cortés from the University of Zaragoza talked about Aragonese. Martínez Cortés is interested in technology to promote languages and his presentation handled this topic in relation to Aragonese. In his talk, he reviewed the current situation of this little-known language and its linguistic community, their weaknesses and the opportunities provided by social media.



Aragonese is listed by UNESCO and other international organizations as a definitely endangered language. The language is spoken in Aragon, situated between the Basque Country and Catalan. A study from 1999 showed that there are about 24.200 speakers left which is about 18,6% of the adult population. Smaller numbers are able to read (10.800) and write (6.000) the language. About 59.000 people are able to understand Aragonese. A new study has been conducted in 2011 but the results are not available yet. Nowadays, Aragonese knows a revitalisation and extinction at the same time. The current status is that several dialects are Spanilised and the transmission from parent to child is lost. Besides these issues, there are more difficulties. There is no economic interest in the language, low social visibility and a low number of speakers. But there are also opportunities: there is a growing motivation to learn and use the language, cultural associations are important, there is a wide access to technology and social media plus internet. Internet and social media are beneficial for minority languages: they offer tools for language teaching, they can add to language awareness and self-esteem and social normalisation. Although new technologies can add to the revitalisation of languages, for some speakers it feels strange to use these, especially when they feel attached to tradition.

Aragonese has been on the web since 1994. Back then there were just a few static Aragonese websites, without regular updates. Since 2004 Aragonese blogs have appeared with a highlight in 2010 when 28 active blogs existed. Since 2010 there is a shifting trend from blogs to social networks. These networks discuss a lot of different topics and are mainly created by new speakers of the language. Also, since July 2004 there is an Aragonese version of Wikipedia called Biquipedia. Based on information from November 2012, 28.500 articles have been published on it so far. The broad arrange of topics on Biquipedia offers lots of opportunities for the Aragonese language and culture. Through social networks like Facebook and Twitter contact between native speakers of other dialectical varieties and new speakers is promoted, there is in increasing linguistic community awareness. Through indigenoustweets.com Martínez Cortés discovered that there are 71 Aragonese tweeters who have published 45.000 tweets so far. So, we can see that the internet lends a helping hand in keeping the Aragonese language alive. Besides the blogs and social networks, there are some other initiatives, like an adult Aragonese language course (since 2007) and since 2011 digital newspapers are available. This is especially important because no paper version ever existed. There is also Aragonese free software available, like a Spanish-Aragonese dictionary, Aragonese spelling checker and software localisation: amongst others Mozilla, Skype, Facebook are now available in Aragonese.

There has been an acceleration of Aragonese through civil society during the last year. But there is still a division between second language speakers of Aragonese and heritage speakers. One of the goals for future is to assess the influence of internet and its possibilities on the heritage speakers. Another goal is to increase the still limited sources of Aragonese in social media. Despite all available new technologies and the possibilities of the internet, Martínez Cortés emphasised that language survival and revitalization will only be successful if intergenerational transmission is restored and children can learn the language at school.

Presentation 7: Anja Nutters – “The use of social media for deaf and hard of hearing students”

Anja Nutters started her presentation by explaining that she teaches at the Guyotschool (Groningen, The Netherlands). This is a secondary school for about hundred deaf and hard of hearing pupils. The languages used for instruction are Dutch and the Dutch sign language. She tells that for these pupils it is very hard to make new friends, since they cannot communicate in an ordinary way. Social media bring a chance for them: they can post messages on Facebook and Twitter like everybody else.

Nutters and her colleagues set up a project on social media at this school. The pupils were experts on the internet and they liked to communicate through social media, but they had to learn some communicative skills, since they sometimes caused miscommunication through putting words in a wrong order. The social media messages were analysed by the pupils and the teachers: what is pleasant social behaviour, how to solve a problem through social media and what are the dos and

don'ts of social media? For these pupils, the main advantages of social media were that one does not need to be able to hear, physical distance does not matter anymore and of course the fun aspect is important. Like Nutters said: "One mouse click presents your opinion".



A question from the visitors was: "Isn't it a problem for them to connect with people they don't know?" Nutters answered that some pupils think it is, but there also are communities for deaf people and being deaf makes a click. The second question was whether it was possible or not to learn sign language through the internet. Nutters told that indeed there's a program for learning it online, which is another advantage of the internet.

Presentation 8: Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones – "Channels of Communication: Language Change From Media to Social Media in Policy and Practice"

Co-editor, with Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed of forthcoming collection *Social Media and Minority Languages: Convergence and the Creative Industries* to be published by Multilingual Matters in February 2013.

In what ways are long established policies and practices changing, when we look at languages and language use? Gruffydd Jones explained that Social media in the minority language is positive for language vitality. She presented some experts and authors who have studied the role of the media and the influence on national identity (*Benedict Anderson 1983, Stephen H. Riggins 1992, Michael Billig 1995, Jonh Tomlinson 2003*). She also gave information on ethnic minority media in an international perspective according to Tom Morning (2007), François Grin etc.

Old Media environment	New Media environment
• analoge	• digital
• discrete	• converged
• corporations	• networks
• lived culture	• virtual culture
• nation states	• globalization
• journalism as a profession	• blogging and DIY media

(Terry Flevo, 2007, *Understanding Global Media*).

The case studies in Wales showed us that English is the dominant language in the public service broadcasting in Wales. There are very little other languages on the BBC, there is seldom Welsh language music and no Welsh in English drama series, and if Welsh is used it is too poor and informal. However, there exist weekly Welsh papers, websites and Welsh radio and television stations.



In 1996, the 'Language Guidelines' were created. Gruffydd Jones stresses the fact that there is no prescriptive policy on how to use those guidelines: when to use English words and when to use other languages on television and radio. She interviewed producers and wanted answers on the key question: *How do they operate linguistically with television and radio commissions?* The producers, who were established producers, between 40 and 50 years old and working on separate independent companies reflected on their own practices and their language use.

The outcomes/responses of those interviews: theoretical the Language Guidelines are important; good for new entrants; modalities are marginal; process of programme making is important, not just the finished product; some producers were sensitive about and irritated by language criticism; some producers felt responsible for the use of the Welsh language and the English crew should not affect the viewers, for example children; the voice-over is greatly improved; the Welsh language use is much better now than in the past.

Gruffydd Jones ended her presentation with some themes for further research and conclusions such as: minority language in the social media as a new territory, new practices are emerging, the engagement or participation levels are low, there is a relation between language and identity, engagement or participation are low and is the relationship between language policy and practice: post hoc or ad hoc? After her presentation participants noted that the questions, issues and themes Gruffydd Jones presented are very similar in the Basque country and in Fryslân.

Presentation 9: Anna Fenyvesi – “What social media offer for language revitalisation: Recovering written language use in minority Finno-Ugric languages”

Anna Fenyvesi started her presentation with giving some contextual information about the Finno-Ugric languages. Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian are the largest Finno-Ugric languages, but there are

many more Finno-Ugric languages. Most of them are spoken in Russia. Since the 16th/17th century the districts where these languages were spoken were dominated by Russian. In the early Soviet times the government took care of the Finno-Ugric languages, but from 1940 on all communication had to be in Russian. In 1970 the Finno-Ugric languages even became a minority in their own district, because of in-migration for the purpose of the oil industry. At the moment, for many young inhabitants the Finno-Ugric languages are like foreign languages and no proper language policy is available.



Social media can cause a shift. The main characteristics of social media are that they are used by young people, that people write in an informal way and through the computer, and that social media can be used to identify groups. The last aspect is important for the minority languages.

Fenyvesi showed us the languages used for Wikipedia. From the Finno-Ugric languages Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian were used most, but also the smaller Finno-Ugric languages in Russia could be found at Wikipedia. Furthermore, the Russian variant of Facebook – V Kontakte, which has more than 140 million users – contains seventy different languages. Russian, English and Ukrainian are on the top, but also Finno-Ugric languages like Mordva, Mari and Udmurt are used.

The advantage of social media is that they strengthen the informal written use of the minority languages amongst the youth. According to Fenyvesi, it would be good to make computerised language tools like spell checkers available for all the Finno-Ugric languages. Social media now already affect one's proficiency level in the minority language, they strengthen one's identity of belonging to a minority language group, and they provide for the revitalisation of the Finno-Ugric languages.

Workshop 1: Frank Scholten – “MySchoolsNetwork: a tool to create world citizens and to build bridges between students, teachers and languages & cultures around the world”

One of the workshops of the seminar was dedicated to the innovative project developed by the NHL university of applied sciences (Leeuwarden/Ljouwert) aimed at the use of English – and other languages alike – in a secure social platform. Students of secondary education (aged 12-14 years) are

invited to participate in monthly events on actual themes or world-wide competitions and projects. Students improve their English communication skills in a playful way in an authentic setting: they develop themselves as global citizens and connect to people all around the world.

The project started in November 2008, currently 56 schools in 15 countries are participating (of which 26 in the Netherlands) with over 4,000 students, and 4 universities. In these years 130 events or tasks have been developed: students are invited to participate in events, to draft letters and descriptions. They receive coaching and feedback from student teachers both on the content and the language production.



Student teachers can connect with their target groups. This will help them to understand children and teenagers, their lives and (sub-)cultures. There are special student events aimed at the development of professional and language skills. Teachers and students are online and make contact with other members of the My Schools Network abroad at least once a week. Teachers – assisted by the student teachers and the moderators – take their responsibility for a respectful social climate on the platform. The monthly event is an excellent ‘spark’ or incentive. Pupils really like to compete. Teachers see My Schools Network as a means to educate their pupils into becoming true citizens of the World.

The future developments of the My Schools Network include special events for other foreign languages (German, French, Spanish, etc.) at secondary education level, as well as mother tongue

and minority languages at primary school alongside with English. In particular the bi-, tri-, and multilingual schools can benefit from this tool which can easily be transformed into a tool to build bridges between multilingual primary and secondary education.

The project was awarded with the 1st prize of the European Language Label 2012 (at the event of the Levende Talen / Europees Platform on 2nd November 2012).

Workshop 2: Firien Dubben and Corinne Nederlof – “Let's start today! - Applying social media in language lessons”

Applying social media in language learning gives you the possibility to connect with pupils and to interconnect pupils. Social media help to make language learning alive and filled with day-to-day activities en contexts.



Participants of the seminar were able to do a workshop in which a lot of work could be done. Goal of this workshop was to give the participants the opportunity to design a plan that included the use of the added value of social media and that could be carried out in their own work as a language teacher. Dubben and Nederlof started the workshop by explaining why everyone should think of the answers on: what kind of outcome do you want and what kind of product are you looking for?

In the first of the two workshops (the first held on Thursday afternoon, the second on Friday morning) participants discussed the difference between the use of Basque and the use of Frisian. In the Basque Country the minority language Basque is used outside school, the majority language Spanish outside school. In Fryslân it is the other way around: the minority language Frisian is spoken outside school and the majority language Dutch inside school. The workshop met the needs of several participants to use social media to encourage parents to use the minority language and provide a platform where parents can find support in helping their children with their Basque homework. One of the participants would like to set up contacts between Frisian schools in order to let students communicate with each other in Frisian. In the second workshop participants designed plans to work with social media in their lessons. Two teachers designed a plan to use Twitter in lessons in which pupils learn to write poems. A researcher who would like to use social media in his

class designed a plan to collect data and to teach his students how to reflect at the same time, serving two purposes in the same assignment.

The workshop leaders set up a Google-plus circle for the participants. Everyone was asked to join the circle and to post their findings and details, so everyone could learn from and read the fellow-participants' plans.

Plans, photos and videos have been uploaded on: [google-plus.com](https://plus.google.com/) and can be accessed through the following: Login: lesserusedlanguages@gmail.com / Password: 2012mercator

Dinner at Thursday 28th of November 2012

After an interesting and hardworking day of nine presentations and two workshops, we ended the second seminar day with a nice dinner at restaurant Van Sminiahuys in Ljouwert. We enjoyed a nice meal with good conversation and ended the evening singing some traditional Basque songs.

Friday 29th of November 2012

Presentation 10: Joanna McPake – “Ar Stòiridh: an app to enhance the use of Gaelic in Gaelic-medium pre-school playrooms”

Joanna McPake described the situation of the Gaelic language use in pre-schools in Scotland. For example, children of 2 years old attend Gaelic pre-school playrooms and receive 2 hours a day language input from a Gaelic speaking practitioner. Few children in Gaelic-medium units now come from Gaelic-speaking families and therefore many first encounter Gaelic in the pre-school playroom, effectively an immersion setting. Therefore, maximising children’s exposure to the language and enhancing their use of it is an on-going challenge for pre-school practitioners. And in this study it was the first time for all of the practitioners using an iPad.



McPake investigated, together with Christine Stephen, the potential of an iPad-app to stimulate greater use of Gaelic in Gaelic-medium pre-school playrooms in Scotland. This very simple app for the youngest children is called *Our Story*¹ and is an interactive storyboard application, which aims to support early language and literacy development. It enables children to use photographs, sound and text to record their own stories – fact or fiction – and play them back on an iPhone or iPad, edit them and share them.

Impressions of practitioners using the iPad app in the playgroups:

Positive impressions/observations	Negative impressions/ observations
Portable attractive	Seems fragile
Size is right for small children	Heavy for smallest children
Quickly work out how to use it	Volume control set low – not for groups
Good for documentation	Only 1 or 2 children can use them
Easy to take home	Uses Wi-Fi
Gaelic is modern	This app does not save things for a long time

¹ Open University *Our Story* app: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z76jcP-np60>

The findings of this study show that the children enjoyed using the app, which encouraged spontaneous and thoughtful use of Gaelic. However, mostly they were not told why they were learning the Gaelic language. An unexpected outcome concerned practitioners' underlying conceptualisations of how young children learn another language and their understanding of their own role as linguistic models and language teachers. Some other conclusions, concerning the needs for practitioners on digital technologies in Gaelic-medium playrooms, were that practitioners wanted to be in control. They want to know what kind of words and how many words the children know. Practitioners do not like the spontaneous production but prefer rather a 'controlled' word production, such as the Language Master; a machine with cards with words and pictures on it. Although the app originally was intended for use among English-speaking families, it can be adapted to different settings and (minority) languages. Now the app is being changed and adjustments are made. Further research is needed.

Presentation 11: Maite Goñi – “Euskaljakintza: Using social media to share and promote Basque language”



Eight years ago Goñi developed the digital system *Euskaljakintza*, which was originally created for the subject of Basque Language and Literature for 17/18 years-olds. The key to the creation of *Euskaljakintza* was two-fold. Two goals were set: firstly, integrate new technology into the teaching/learning process, and use this technology and emerging social media to promote the Basque Language – Euskera - on the internet. Secondly, increasing the motivation of the students towards the Basque language. Various exercises are available and the goals were reached in the four domains speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Such as:

- writing and collecting articles, poems, books and book reviews;
- students interviewed people who have made a significant contribution to Basque society;
- students generated and practiced grammar revision exercises;

- recording audiobooks and students recorded their own speaking and singing.
- translations of web applications
- etc.

A lot of this material has enabled people in the Basque Country – and also worldwide since the internet has globalised our lives – to learn and/or improve Basque. Also, many have succeeded in passing the EGA exam, which is the Basque language certificate of linguistic competence. Goñi and her students were awarded several times for the success of the project and the contribution to the Basque language.

Goñi ended her presentation with the message that she is an activist and that her students also have their share in learning and promoting the Basque language. As *Ghandi said: 'little things can make a big difference'*.

Presentation 12: Niamh ní Bhroin – “Small pieces in a social innovation puzzle? Motivations; minority language users; social media”

What are motivating factors to use social media in order to protect minority languages? This was the main question of Ní Bhroin’s presentation. The question was approached from the prospective of individuals. The individuals used social media through their minority language. Social media gives the opportunity to interact with each other, which leads to socially innovative practices. Social innovative practices have been studied by 21 active Northern Sami and Irish language users of social media. Online ethnographic methods were used to observe language use in social media. In addition, interviews were used to get a clear image of the use and motivation of the participants to use the minority language through social media.



Ní Bhroin pointed out that there are several models in order to use collaborative innovation; for example the ‘Hybrid’ and the ‘Pure’ model. Within this research, collaborative innovation was divided into intrinsic and extrinsic (self-determined and externally determined) innovations. Results of the study showed that the extrinsic (externally-determined) participants were the most relevant to socially innovative practices in order to protect the minority language.

Workshop 1: Mirjam Vellinga “How to build a community with the use of a minority language”



Workshop 2: Workshop: Let's start today! - Applying social media in language lessons

For further details of the workshop content see the information on page 16.



Presentation 13: Durk Gorter – “Minority languages and new technologies: solutions and threats”

The advances in new technologies have implications for European minority languages such as Basque or Frisian. Durk Gorter showed us the outcomes of a research on English language skills in Spain, in which the BAC shows the highest skills, even though the Basque often apologize before they start to speak English. Gorter asked his own students whether they apologize for the quality of their English. The answers were very variable. Furthermore, Gorter identified the presence of Basque and Frisian on the web. For example in Google translate, which contains the Basque language, but not the Frisian. Wikipedia is in both languages, and Basque turns out to be doing very well! Since language learning communities are the most efficient way to learn a language, Gorter also looked at the possibilities on the web to learn Frisian or Basque or to buy an language course. Conclusion: Basque is available, but Frisian is hardly available. There is an interest in Basque, because it is an exotic language. This does raise a question though: to what level could one learn a foreign language? It brought Gorter to the following statement: focus on multilingualism, because there is no end to language learning. Besides that, it appears that the languages are separated in the schools, but students mix the languages in social media. We have to bridge the gap between out of school practices (mixing languages) and formal school practices (use one language at the time). Technology gives rise to new forms of multilingualism by using language technologies that make a contribution to removing language boundaries. In the long run language technology solutions can serve as a bridge between minority, majority languages and English. For Basque and Frisian a number of products and resources have been developed in the field of language technology. One of the major threats for Basque and Frisian is that they lack sufficient implementation of language technology solutions in everyday life. One can observe better prospects for Basque to achieve a good position in this technology than for Frisian. The development of high-quality language technology for Basque, Frisian and other minority languages is urgent for their use.



New technologies in our globalised world have launched social networks that encourage interactions between people. There is an increasing need to communicate with different languages among people who move between language communities (for tourism, work or immigration). Gorter discussed a few examples of future practices: learn languages with other persons in games – in doing this you deliver translations to the web – and include minority languages in future developments to translate a spoken or written text.

Presentation 14: Cynog Prys – “Chances or risks of social media for lesser-used languages: a Welsh perspective”

In Wales there is a new generation of language legislation. The Welsh Assembly Government now has legislative competence over the Welsh language. The new language strategy is: *A living language: A language for living (2012)*. In this new era new media is seen as an important consideration for language planners in Wales. In the twenty-first century, the existence of Welsh-language digital media content and applications not only allows the Welsh language to flourish, but it also enables Welsh speakers to participate fully as digital citizens. However, very little information is available on the online use of Welsh.

Prys (together with Cunliffe and Morris) conducted a research to provide an answer on the general research question: To what extent is the Welsh language used online? Other questions are: Does language use change according to modalities (i.e. speech, texting, email, social networking sites)? What are the regional differences in the online use of Welsh? What effect is Welsh medium education having on language use outside of the classroom?

Four Welsh medium secondary schools agreed to take part in the research: two in Northwest Wales and two in Southeast Wales. Online questionnaires were conducted in each school with pupils between the ages of 13-18.

The findings were: English is the main language used online, including on Facebook. Welsh is seen as less appropriate, especially for status updates on Facebook. However, Welsh is used on social network services such as Facebook, especially in the North West. Language used on social network services largely reflects language use in the community. Very little Welsh is used outside of the classroom in the Southeast, including on social network services. Both languages (English and Welsh) are used outside of the classroom in the Northwest, including on social network services.



In his conclusion, Prys used the metaphor of the double-edged sword: yes, social media is an exciting and relevant form of communication, and can be used to reinforce social networks and create new ones. They can connect isolated minority language speakers and provide opportunities for language use. But on the other edge of the sword: social media reinforce language norms that favour the majority language use and the ideas regarding majority languages as the language of modernity and fashion, and they dilute minority language speaking networks.



Seminar closure

Cor van der Meer, of the Mercator Research Centre / Fryske Akademy thanked all speakers, workshop leaders and participants for their contributions and discussions. We were able to look back on another interesting, educational and fruitful seminar. We hope to be able to look forward to organising a 7th Expert Seminar in 2014.

The social event on Friday 29th of November 2012

After the seminar closure by Cor van der Meer we headed straight for the coach that was already waiting to take us to Harns, to visit the statue of Caspar de Robles, a Spanish vice-regent of Fryslân from 1527-1585.



Next, the coach took us to the charming village of Frjentsjer where we saw some of Frjentsjer's famous buildings (Martini church and the former town hall) about which guides were able to tell us more about the history the buildings.



Next stop was the Planetarium of Eise Eisinga. Eise Eisinga, a wool carder, built an accurately moving model of the solar system in his own living room of his canalside house between 1774 and 1781. Back then, people were afraid that a couple of planets would collide with one another, as a result of a conjunction of planets that occurred on 8 May 1774. People insisted that these planets would collide with one another before the conjunction, the result being that the earth would be pulled from its orbit and incinerated in the sun. Eise Eisinga wanted to show that there was no reason for panic and build the Planetarium to show the people they were wrong. Besides the world's oldest still working planetarium, the canalside house also offers a nice museum with an extensive collection of historic astronomical instruments.



After the visit to the Planetarium we enjoyed a well-earned and nice dinner at the Stadsherberg in Frjentsjer and around 10 pm the coach set off back to the hotel in Ljouwert again.





Lessons and conclusions

This sixth Basque-Frisian expert seminar has provided an excellent opportunity for exchanging research results, discussions and future perspectives on the topic of a currently active topic: the role of social media in lesser used languages. The various presentations have provided us with relevant information and insights on the pros and cons, the opportunities and the challenges of the use of social media in and for lesser used languages. The workshops provided hand-on experiences for all participants, making clear how social media can contribute in various ways to sustaining and promoting lesser used languages, inside and outside the classroom and for all ages. The Expert Seminar also proved a great podium for social networking amongst fellow-researchers, teachers and other participants.



An evaluation form that was filled in by the participants showed that nearly everyone was very satisfied with the theme, presentations and the practical organisation of the European Expert Seminar.

For further information please visit our website: www.mercator-research.eu