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Efficient corpus development for lexicography: building the New Corpus for Ireland

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Abstract In a 12-month project we have developed a new, register-diverse, 55-million-word bilingual corpus—the New Corpus for Ireland (NCI)—to support the creation of a new English-to-Irish dictionary. The paper describes the strategies we employed, and the solutions to problems encountered. We believe we have a good model for corpus creation for lexicography, and others may find it useful as a blueprint. The corpus has two parts, one Irish, the other Hiberno-English (English as spoken in Ireland). We describe its design, collection and encoding.

Keywords Corpus linguistics · Lexicography · Computational linguistics · Natural language processing · Dictionaries · Irish · Gaelic · Hiberno-English · Language technology

1 Introduction

In this paper we describe the development of the New Corpus for Ireland (NCI)—a substantial lexicographic corpus in two parts, one being Irish (the Celtic language of Ireland), the other Hiberno-English (the variety of English that is spoken in Ireland). We describe its *design, collection*, and *encoding*.

A corpus is of optimal use to lexicographers if it is loaded into a corpus query tool which supports them in finding collocational and grammatical patterns. To that end the corpus must be grammatically analyzed. While suitable tools were available for English, they were not for Irish, so we extended work on an Irish lemmatizer, and developed a part-of-speech tagger and set of grammatical relation definitions for Irish.

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The NCI was developed as part of the set-up phase of a project for a new English-to-Irish Dictionary (NEID).[1] The NEID is intended to be used by scholars, school and university students, translators, people working in the media, and the general public. It will replace the current main reference work, Tomas de Bhaldraithe's *English–Irish Dictionary* (1959), a highly-regarded dictionary but now almost 50-years-old.

The island of Ireland includes both the Republic of Ireland and, in the North, six counties of the province of Ulster, which form part of the United Kingdom. The border was not critical to the project; collaborators and texts alike were sought both North and South of the border, and the language and dialects of Ulster were treated on a par with those of other regions. In this paper, ''Ireland'' means the whole island.

About 62,000 speakers use Irish as their main everyday language, and almost 340,000 speakers use Irish on a daily basis.[2] It was the main language of Ireland until English displaced it (substantially as a result of language policies under the British Empire). It remains the chief language in a few parts of the island, collectively known as the Gaeltacht, which are mainly located along the western seaboard. There are three main dialects of Irish—Connacht, Munster, and Ulster— corresponding respectively to the most westerly, southerly, and northerly areas. The language has an important place in Irish culture and identity and is very widely taught in schools.[3]

Irish is one of the two official languages of Ireland, the other being English. The Irish language belongs to the Celtic branch of the Indo-European family of languages, and within this branch, it forms part of the Goidelic branch along with Manx and Scots Gaelic, the other tradition being Brythonic, which comprises Welsh, Cornish, and Breton.

The remainder of the paper describes the *design, collection*, and *encoding* of the NCI in Sects. 2, 3, and 4. A particular area of innovation was the use of the web as a source of some of the constituent texts, and the issues arising there are covered in some detail, as are the practical issues of data 'cleaning'. The morphological analyzer and part-of-speech tagger for Irish are described in Sect. 5. Section 6 describes the project team and resources, with a view to assisting others with comparable projects in mind to assess the resources they require. Section 7 outlines possible further developments, and Sect. 8 concludes.

2 Design

In the first instance, a detailed corpus-design document was prepared, and the target sizes for the two major components were agreed as 30 million words for Irish, and 25 million words for Hiberno-English. These figures were judged to be realistic given the time constraints of the project. The Hiberno-English target is slightly smaller reflecting the fact that this was to be an entirely new corpus whereas the Irish corpus

[1] The project is under the direction of Foras na Gaeilge, the government-funded body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland, whose statutory functions include the development of new dictionaries (http://www.forasnagaeilge.ie). Full details of the NEID project can be found at http://www.focloir.ie. The main contractor for setting up the project, including corpus preparation, is Lexicography MasterClass Ltd (http://www.lexmasterclass.com/).

[2] Figures from the 2002 Census.

[3] Irish is taught throughout the school system, and about 30,000 students are educated in Irish-medium schools, 'Gaelscoileanna'.

would build upon earlier work, and it would be used in conjunction with corpora of British and American English. The other key requirements were that the corpus should form an adequate data source to support a major programme of lexicographic work, and that it should be collected and encoded within the one-year set-up phase for the new dictionary.

2.1 The English component

For the NEID project, the source language (SL) for the dictionary is English, and, more specifically, the English language as spoken in Ireland, with standard forms of British and American English also accounted for. The methodology proposed for compiling the dictionary (and used in creating over 100 sample entries) is the ''translated framework'' model (see Atkins, 2002: 4–11), which entails three stages:

1. developing a source-language framework, in which each SL headword has a detailed, example-rich database entry
2. inserting target-language translations of key elements in this framework
3. deriving final bilingual dictionary entries from the translated framework.

The outcome of Stage 1 in this process is a database in which each headword in the source language is provided with a fine-grained entry. The features of each lexical unit (or word sense) are exhaustively described to reflect recurrent patterning in the corpus data. In Stage 2, translators use the target-language corpus to select appropriate translations for each lexical unit and its main features. The benefits of the ''translated framework'' approach are that its systematic coverage reduces the need for discretionary decision-making by individual editors, so improving the reliability of project-scheduling. The rich lexical database it produces not only supports the lexicography but has long-term value for publishers and researchers.

The detailed Stage 1 analysis requires a very large source-language corpus. To this end, the Hiberno-English side of the corpus was supplemented by the 100-million-word British National Corpus (BNC[4]) for British English, and 100 million words taken from the Linguistic Data Consortium's English Gigaword corpus,[5] for American English. Thus this larger corpus—''NCI+''— comprises 225 million words of English. The BNC was designed for lexicography and includes a wide range of text types, including 10 million words of transcribed speech. The Gigaword is journalism, taken from four newswire services.

Target proportions were set for different text types. There are no generally-agreed objective criteria that can be applied to this task: at best, corpus designers strive for a reasonable representation of the full repertoire of available text-types. One of the most conscientious attempts at a well-balanced general corpus is the BNC, so we took its design principles as our starting point (see Atkins, Clear, & Ostler, 1992), and modified them in response to local factors, viz:

[4] See http://natcorp.ox.ac.uk

[5] See http://www.ldc.upenn.edu/Catalog/CatalogEntry.jsp?catalogId=LDC2003T05

- the social and cultural salience, in Ireland, of certain genres and domains which had played a less central role in the BNC, for example reminiscences, rural folklore and the Catholic religion
- within the category of journalism, high-status national newspapers such as the *Irish Times* approximate more closely to the norms of standard British English than papers with a more local remit; a higher proportion of journalistic data was therefore selected from smaller local publications
- time and budget constraints did not allow for developing new spoken corpus data; the only transcribed speech would be taken from already-existing spoken corpora
- the plan, agreed at the outset, to include data taken from the web.

The Hiberno-English component would cover the period since the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922, with a focus on current language. Wherever possible, texts would be classified according to whether the author was from the north, south, west or east of Ireland. We were able to record this information in a majority of cases.

2.2 The Irish component

2.2.1 Native speakers

For English in Ireland, the cases where authors are not native speakers are marginal. For Irish, however, it is a critical issue. In the whole population of users of Irish, native speakers form a small percentage. However a majority of Irish children learn some Irish in school, and substantial numbers go on to work with Irish and write in it. Consequently, a high proportion of the Irish that is produced, in books, newspapers, and official documents, and on radio, television, and the web, is produced by non-native speakers.[6] It was desirable that a significant proportion of the Irish corpus should be taken from native-speaker sources. For most newspaper, web, and official material, it would not be practical to determine whether the author was a native speaker. But for books, which were to make up 50% of the corpus, it was usually possible to determine the author's status, and special efforts were therefore made to target native-speaker texts and record details of the author's origins.

2.2.2 Dialect

There are three main dialects of Irish: Connacht, Munster, and Ulster. Again, information was only likely to be available for books (with the provenance of local newspapers providing a clue for newspaper text). Our objective was that the corpus should represent all three dialects as evenly as possible, and we would aim to record as much information about the authors as we could reasonably discover. In the event, thanks largely to the encyclopedic knowledge of our Corpus Development Manager (see Sect. 6, below), we were able to establish place-of-birth and place-of-residence for most of the authors in the corpus. While information at this level of detail goes beyond the usual needs of lexicographers, it nevertheless meets the longer-term goal of developing rich linguistic resources for Irish.

[6] While this is clearly also true of English worldwide, it is a lesser consideration for English produced in Ireland, where English is the mother tongue of an overwhelming majority of the population.

2.2.3 Diachronicity, and ''high quality'' Irish

A tension that arose in relation to the design of the Irish component concerned the issue of ''high quality'' Irish. As with many languages which have experienced falling levels of use, there is an argument that the truest form of the language is best represented by its use before the collapse set in. (For Irish, the date may be set between the Irish famine of 1844–1845 and the First World War). An associated concern is that many of the documents that are produced in Irish today, and readily available in electronic form, are translations, usually from English, produced by organizations which are required (by legislation or political considerations) to supply documents in Irish as well as in English. The document may not have been translated well, and may not have been translated by a native speaker of Irish.

These factors make up the case for filtering potential corpus documents to accept only ''high quality Irish''. The case against has both theoretical and practical aspects. The first argument is simply that the selection of documents according to a criterion of quality is precisely the kind of subjective and value-laden process that corpus linguists have always sought to avoid. Who should judge what is good or bad Irish, and according to what criteria? It is likely to be people whose concerns lie with the literary heritage of the language, so the evolving, living language may simply be deemed ''low quality'' and thereby excluded from the corpus—an outcome that sits uncomfortably with the broad range of uses expected of the new dictionary.

A related argument concerns the descriptive ethos inherent in most modern corpus-building initiatives. It is desirable that a general-purpose lexicographic corpus includes the full repertoire of text-types in a language, not just a subset. While to Samuel Johnson it was an ''obvious rule'' that his citations should be drawn from ''writers of the first reputation'' (Johnson, 1747), this approach was superseded a century later by Chenevix Trench in his seminal paper *Of some deficiencies in our English dictionaries* (1857). In characterising the lexicographer as ''an historian, not a critic'', Trench laid the foundations for modern lexicography and ushered in the rigorously descriptive methodology on which the Oxford English Dictionary was based.

A further argument against a carefully selected corpus of high-quality Irish concerns the lexicographic process. In the current project—an English-to-Irish bilingual dictionary—it is the source language (SL) that is to be described in detail, so the target-language (TL) corpus has a secondary role. It is largely there for checking whether candidate translations, as produced by the human translators, are ''natural''. (As yet there is limited computational support for this process, though see e.g. Janes (2004).) The TL corpus is only useful to the extent that it shows how arbitrary source-language phrases might be translated, so it needs very wide coverage. It has to be able to help the translator whether the expression is low-brow or high-brow, literary or mundane: ''boot the computer'', ''asylum seekers' hostel'' and ''air-freight it to Sudan'' as well as ''the babbling brook''. The corpus should therefore be as large as possible and as broad in its coverage as possible. A quality filter is likely to compromise both goals.

We took the view that the Irish component of the corpus should include a wide range of text-types, selected on standard corpus-gathering principles, but that we should make special efforts to describe each constituent text in sufficient detail to enable lexicographers to make informed decisions and (if appropriate) to create subcorpora of, for example, native-speaker Irish, and that where there was a choice

of which texts to use to represent a text type, we would where possible choose native-speaker texts.

The Irish corpus is clearly a resource for many purposes beyond the preparation of the NEID; within the project reported on here, the needs of NEID lexicography were foremost. All being well, the corpus development programme will continue, and at other stages, literary and historical studies may well move centre-stage.

The Irish to be covered by the NCI was language produced during the period from 1883 to the present day, though most of the earlier texts (written before 1960) would be largely in the ''imaginative'' genres (fiction, drama, and reminiscences). The start date was chosen to fit with an electronic archive project at the Royal Irish Academy, which has an end date of 1882 (see http://www.ria.ie/projects/fng/index.html).

2.3 Delivery formats

One design question concerned encoding and delivery formats. For longevity, and as an interchange format, it was clearly appropriate that the corpus be delivered in XML, and in a standard corpus-encoding formalism. For the purpose, the corpus was to be delivered in the XML Corpus Encoding Standard, XCES (see http://xces.org).

However, for the corpus to be usable, an XCES corpus was only one part of what was required. The corpus also had to be loaded into a corpus-querying system (CQS). Any particular CQS will have encoding conventions more specific than those imposed by XCES, which dictate which searches can be made easily and efficiently. The tool adopted for this project was the Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff, Rychly, Smrz, & Tugwell, 2004; http://www.sketchengine.co.uk). The project included the delivery of a version of the corpus loaded into the Sketch Engine, in a set-up in which the type of queries a lexicographer would regularly need to make could be made quickly and efficiently and statistical summaries of a word's grammatical and collocational behaviour (*word sketches*) were available.

2.4 Targets

In the design stage, we set targets for the proportions of different types of text. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 New Corpus for Ireland by text type: target figures (see Table 3 for actuals)

Text category	Targets for Irish		Targets for Hiberno-English	
	Percentages	Words	Percentages	Words
Books-imaginative	30%	9,000,000	30%	7,500,000
Books-informative	20%	6,000,000	20%	5,000,000
Books total	*50%*	*15,000,000*	*50%*	*12,500,000*
Newspapers	15%	4,500,000	15%	3,750,000
Periodicals	8%	2,500,000	9%	2,250,000
News+Per. total	*23%*	*7,000,000*	*24%*	*6,000,000*
Official/Govt	5%	1,500,000	4%	1,000,000
Broadcast	3%	1,000,000	3%	750,000
Websites	18%	5,500,000	19%	4,750,000
Totals		**30,000,000**		**25,000,000**

3 Data collection

Three corpus collection strategies were used:

- incorporating existing corpora
- contacting publishers, authors, newspaper companies etc. to request permission to use their texts
- collecting data from the web.

The budget did not support a scanning programme. No texts which were not already in electronic form were used.

3.1 Existing resources

Irish was one of the languages of the EU PAROLE project, and as part of that project, an 8-million-word corpus of Irish had been developed at ITÉ (Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, the Linguistic Institute of Ireland). ITÉ had continued its data collection programme after the end of the PAROLE project and had several million further words of Irish text in its archive, with varying levels of copyright clearance. This formed the core of the Irish corpus.

For English, as mentioned above, the NCI was supplemented by the BNC and Gigaword. We also learned that there were two corpora of transcribed Hiberno-English speech already in existence: the 1-million-word Limerick Corpus of Irish-English[7] and the 400,000-word Northern Ireland Corpus of Transcribed Speech (NICTS) from Queen's University Belfast. Both were, with the kind permission of the corpus collectors, incorporated into NCI+.

3.1.1 Duplication in Gigaword

We had assumed that material we received from other corpora would already be reliable, from a corpus linguistics perspective. So we were taken aback when, on loading NCI+ into the Sketch Engine, we found high levels of duplicate text.

The Gigaword data is taken from four newswire services. These services provide bulletins of news stories up to several times a day. The distributor of the Gigaword, the Linguistic Data Consortium, had taken the full set of these bulletins, transformed them into minimally-marked-up XML, and packaged them as the English Gigaword corpus.

The duplication arose because successive bulletins often contained the same news story—either word-for-word identical, or modified, perhaps because there had been some new development. We applied de-duplication strategies as developed for the web, as discussed below (3.3.1).

3.2 Contacting publishers, authors, newspaper companies

Our Corpus Development Manager, who had extensive contacts in the publishing industry in Ireland, contacted as many publishers and other copyright-holders as possible. Potential text-donors were given a short document outlining the nature of the project and its importance for Ireland's heritage and future, and explaining

[7] See http://www.ul.ie/~lcie/

(for a mainly non-corpus-aware audience) how donated text would be used in dictionary-making. They were asked to contribute to the project by sending electronic copies of texts, and signed copyright letters which allowed the texts to be used as part of a lexicographic corpus.

This was a substantial task (as we had learned during the development of the BNC), calling for high levels of persistence. However, the response was in the main very positive, with most copyright-owners pleased to be associated with the project.

3.2.1 Text delivery and pre-processing

Once we had agreement-in-principle, we needed to acquire the text. Sometimes it was sent on CD or other media, sometimes it was received by email. Occasionally, despite promises, it took further charm and persistence before (a) the signed copyright permission form and (b) the text itself, were in our hands. For some texts, the process was not complete within the time limits of the project.

As expected, text arrived in a wide range of formats, including proprietary ones such as Quark, so the first step was to reduce everything to the same plain-text format. Further steps are covered in Sect. 4, below.

3.3 Web data

The web offers enormous possibilities for corpus development, for language of all varieties (Kilgarriff & Grefenstette, 2003) and for 'smaller' languages in particular (Jones & Ghani 2000). Following earlier collaborations, we worked with Infogistics Ltd., a company with expertise in computational linguistics, web crawling and large scale data transformation.

Infogistics ran some experiments to determine how much Irish there might be on the web, using the method presented in Grefenstette and Nioche (2000): identify some words which are common in Irish but do not occur in other languages; find their frequencies in a known corpus of Irish (the PAROLE corpus); find their frequencies on the web (using a search engine such as Altavista); and scale up. They undertook to deliver 15 million words of Irish and 20 million words of Hiberno-English, processed into XCES-compliant XML. The text was to be as varied as possible, from a wide range of websites. They delivered the data in three iterations, and at each turn, we inspected it and reported back on any problems we encountered, which they addressed prior to the next iteration.

There have been numerous discussions, on for example the CORPORA mailing list, on the copyright status of web-derived data in corpora. We did not ask for permission to include web documents: corpus preparation is not different in legally significant ways to the activities of search engine companies, which also gather material in bulk, process it and index it in a variety of ways, and grant access to users of small sections (or, in the case of for example Google's cached pages the whole page) to clients.

We first briefly discuss some recurring themes of corpus development from the web, then duplication, and then how we found Irish and Hiberno-English material.

Input formats (e.g. .txt, html, pdf, rtf, MS-Word, postscript): How many different document formats can be converted to plain text and used in the corpus? We used all of those listed. We aimed to avoid ''dynamic'' pages, which are generated when the

user calls them up, as they introduce assorted complications such as highly repetitive boiler-plate text, or text generated by computer, and would not increase the spread of the corpus.

Formatting: the corpus collector's default model is continuous uninterrupted text, but on the web, frames and pages are often used to split up a text, and text is often split across different, short web pages. Documents which are ''split'' in ways which do not respect linguistic structure (such as sentence-boundaries and paragraph-boundaries), must be either rebuilt, so that the result reconstructs the correct linguistic structure, or rejected. We rebuilt in the straightforward cases and rejected in others.

Character representations: The standard Irish alphabet uses only characters that can be encoded in the Latin-1 character set, so the problem was limited; nonetheless there were various complications. For example, pdf files represented accented characters in different ways, depending on the software used to generate the pdf and the kind of source text the pdf was generated from.

Navigational material: text like ''click here'' ''next page'' ''further details'' is specific to web genres, and will distort the statistics if left in a lexicographic corpus. Common navigational phrases and constructions were identified and removed, for both Irish and English.

Lists: the web contains many lists: price lists, product lists, the players in a sports team, the companies in a business sector, local councillors, and so on. It is not obvious where lists should be included in a corpus, and where excluded, and much will depend on the uses to which the corpus will be put: if it is to be used as a source of names, then lists will be very useful, and if as a source of technical terminology, then product lists may be particularly valuable. Some lists contain noun phrases, others may contain full sentences or more. For our (lexicographic) purposes, the rule of thumb was that we most wanted language when it occurred in sentences, and lists which displayed no sentence-like characteristics were rejected. We checked to see whether strings of texts included items we recognize as verbs. (The issue interacts with unit-size and duplication, see below.)

Linguistically-aware spam: there is an ongoing ''arms war'' between spammers and the search engines (notably, as market leader, Google). Google and others want to point users to the most relevant websites, and spammers aim to inveigle themselves into that process so that Google directs users to their websites. Search engines work through words as search terms (amongst other things— Google also uses links), so text is one of the battlefields. The spammers invent new stratagems, which the search engine teams strive to detect and counteract, in an ongoing process. The manoeuvres include adding thousands of words into web pages, in the same colour as the background, so they are visible to search engines but invisible to users. Google counteracts by ignoring lists of words, maybe drawn from a dictionary, that do not look like continuous text, and the spammers counteract by making their spam look more text-like. We developed strategies for excluding 'text' with spam-like characteristics.

3.3.1 Duplication

Duplication is pervasive on the web, for a wide range of reasons, from caching to quotation and plagiarism. Sometimes the duplication is exact, sometimes approximate.

Web corpora which have not been ''de-duplicated'' are highly problematic, and any statistics derived from them are likely to be misleading.

Duplicates present a theoretical question: what is the textual unit for identification of duplicates? If the unit is set too large, lots of duplicates will remain, but if the unit is set too small, as, say, a sentence, then common sentences like ''How do you do?'' will be rejected as duplicates, throwing out the linguistic fact that this is a very common expression and destroying the integrity of documents from which it has been excised.

The task contrasts with that of Clough, Gaizauskas, Piao, and Wilks (2002) in that they were assessing re-use of journalistic text where a key aspect is the possible rewriting of sentences. For our purposes, a rewritten sentence is not a duplicate, and the challenge lay rather in the scale of the problem.[8]

The algorithm developed by Infogistics considered units at both the sentence level and the text level, and rejected texts where x% of the sentences were duplicates, as follows:

1. order texts, from longest to shortest.
2. set sentence-db to empty
3. for each text
   a. set sentence-count and duplicate-sentence-count to 0 and empty the buffer
   b. break into sentences
   c. for each sentence over 25 characters long
      i. normalize:
         1. delete all non-alphanumeric characters and characters above ASCII 127
         2. convert all characters to lower case
      ii. if normalized sentence is in sentence-db (using an exact match), increment duplicate-sentence-count; else add normalized sentence to buffer
      iii. increment sentence-count
   d. if duplicate-sentence-count > x% of sentence-count reject text; else accept text, add sentences in buffer to sentence-db.

The de-duplication was applied to the whole web corpus in one large process. The normalization means that different variants of a text (where, for example, one is derived from a Word version, another from html, and a third from pdf) will be mapped to the same normalized version. All texts which were accepted are stored in their un-normalized format.

The reason for ordering the texts is to address the case where one text is a part of another. We wish to keep the whole and reject the part, which is achieved by considering texts in length order. Values of x of 60% and 80% were explored. The value made little difference to the number of texts rejected, confirming the validity of the approach. A 60% value was selected.

Where texts contain very few sentences, one would expect the method to be less reliable. In common with others using the web as a corpus, we found that very short pages (and also very long pages) tend not to contain usable text. But since we in any case rejected web pages which did not contain a reasonable number of sentences, the issue did not arise.

[8] Since the work was done, the shingling algorithm (Broder, Glassman, Manasse, & Zweig, 1997) has become widely known as the leading tool for de-duplication.

Our use of the corpus to date shows the method to have been fully effective. No unwanted duplication has been encountered.

3.3.2 Irish

Our two strategies for gathering Irish were (1) going to known Irish-language sites and downloading the whole site, and possibly also pages linked to from that site; and (2) entering a set of Irish words in Google and harvesting the pages that Google found. In both cases, it was necessary to check whether each page was Irish. For this a high-accuracy language-identifier was developed, using the PAROLE corpus as a sample of Irish to start from.

One issue which was not fully resolved in the PAROLE corpus was mixed-language text. A proportion of documents ''in Irish'' also have sections, or sentences, or phrases in English, and in fact about 5% of the text in the PAROLE Irish corpus is in English. Web pages often included quotations of English in otherwise Irish text or vice versa, or mixed-language dialogue, or ''bitexts'' where tables had an Irish column and an English column, or a paragraph followed by its translation.

We used ''paragraphs'' as the unit for language identification. Approximations to paragraphs were identified using low-level cues, predominantly line-breaks and corresponding html markup. We developed an Irish-language-identifier based on Irish-language-only words and letter sequences, and applied it to the paragraphs, accepting them only if the identifier deemed them Irish. Some units thus identified were however too small to accept or reject without looking at the context. We accepted a paragraph as Irish if it was a long paragraph which the language-identifier identified as Irish, or a short paragraph which was associated with Irish long paragraphs.

We encountered several websites dedicated to the teaching of the Irish language. These presented an acute form of the mixed-language problem, with phrases, sentences and paragraphs of Irish mixed with explanations and instructions in English. This material, too, was rejected.

3.3.3 Hiberno-English

The obvious question for Hiberno-English was: how could it be distinguished from other varieties of English? While an optimal answer might depend on internal evidence, it was an output, not an input, of the project to identify what was characteristic about Hiberno-English. We considered various strategies for identifying Hiberno-English websites. The one we used was this: assume that the English on a website is Hiberno-English, if there is also Irish on the website. It seems plausible that most sites with content in Irish will be produced in Ireland by Irish people, so the English on those sites can be assumed to be Hiberno-English. Using this heuristic, there was no shortage of Hiberno-English.

3.3.4 Newspapers

In terms of collection strategy, newspapers turned out to be intermediate between ''web collection'' and ''ask the publisher'' collection. When we asked newspaper publishers and they gave us permission to use their text, they told us the easiest way

for us to acquire the texts was from their websites, and this is what we did. (This situation only arose for Hiberno-English newspapers.) For classification purposes, text from printed newspapers was categorized as ''Newspaper'' (see Table 1, above) even if we collected it from the web.

3.3.5 Web text types

The questions, ''what types of text are there on the web, and in what proportions?'' are large, hard, and under-researched (Kilgarriff & Grefenstette, 2003). To give an idea of the range and variety of texts gathered for Irish in this project, we list in Table 2 a dozen websites from which we took substantial quantities of text, along with the types of document found in each.

Text types requiring particular consideration include chatroom, email, bulletin boards and discussion lists. They are sociolinguistically interesting as they are new genres, native to the web and distinct from pre-existing genres. However they are hard to use in the same way as more traditional textual material. There are large numbers of abbreviations, reduced forms and spelling mistakes, and any Irish material found in them tends to be freely mixed with English. This causes problems for the corpus developer and for the lexicographer, for example when they want to find all examples of a word: occurrences with non-standard spellings and spelling errors will be missed. For these reasons, for the time being, these genres have not been included in the NCI.

3.3.6 Web text selection

At 15 million words for Irish and 20 million for Hiberno-English, our goals for web text collection were much higher than required for the NCI: as Table 1 shows, our

Table 2 Sample of websites and text types for Irish web corpus collection

Name	Organization type	Document types include:
FUTA FATA	Magazine	Reviews of, and extracts from Irish novels, books of poetry
Galway County Council	County Council	Policy statements, application forms
University College Galway	University	Policy statements, statements of objectives, reports
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Government Department	Speeches and press-releases from the Minister, news reports
Údarás na Gaeltachta	Regional Development Agency	Announcements, forms, policy statements, grant schemes
Ógras	Irish-language Youth Organization	Activities, competitions
Sinn Féin	Political party	History, policy, events
Gaelport/Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge	Umbrella Irish-language organization	Electronic newsletter
Rondomondo	Magazine	Arts, music, drama
Irish Army/Navy	Armed forces	missions, career descriptions
Raidió na Gaeltachta	Radio station	Notices, news
Aran Mór College	College	Advertising, programmes, activities

NCI targets were just 5.5 million for Irish and 5 million for Hiberno-English. This gave us a large surplus of web data.

For Hiberno-English, we inspected the downloaded data in order to identify recurrent problems, in particular comparing corpus frequencies against the BNC to spot evidence of unwanted skews in the data. No particular skews were found, but various kinds of unwanted material were. The results were fed back to Infogistics, who refined their filters accordingly. The process went through three iterations.. Once we were satisfied that the data was, broadly-speaking, of good quality, we took a random sample (while retaining the full range of domains, to keep the corpus as broad as possible.). We followed a similar approach for Irish using the PAROLE corpus as a reference point. We found an anomaly in relation to first and second person pronouns, which had lower frequencies in the first iteration of the web data than in PAROLE. We uncovered the source of the anomaly as the preponderance of legal statutes, which do not use the pronouns. We put a ceiling on the quantity of this kind of text which we would include.

For Irish the checking process gave us the opportunity to filter out poor-quality text. For some web-derived data, the issue is not so much whether a text is a pleasing example of written Irish (as discussed in Sect. 2.2.3), but simply whether it conforms to minimum standards of acceptability. Our senior Irish linguist studied a sample of each of the main websites we had used as sources of data, and declared them ''good'', ''OK'', or ''bad''. According to this criteria, there was just enough ''good'' and ''OK'' text to meet our needs, so these were the texts we used.

3.4 Actual corpus composition, compared with targets

Table 3 shows the composition of the final corpus, compared with our original targets.

For the most part, our a priori targets could be met. The biggest disparity is in the Books category. Imaginative texts were harder to find (for both languages) than originally anticipated. No formal targets for dialect or native-speaker provenance had been established but nonetheless it is good to note that almost half of the text in the Books category of the Irish corpus can be reliably attributed to Irish native-speaker authors. Around 80% is categorized as belonging to one of the three major dialects.

Table 3 New Corpus for Ireland: target figures and actuals

Text category	Irish		Hiberno-English	
	Words: actual	Words: target	Words: actual	Words: target
Books-imaginative	7,600,000	9,000,000	6,000,000	7,500,000
Books-informative	8,400,000	6,000,000	7,000,000	5,000,000
[Books total	*16,000,000*	*15,000,000]*	*13,000,000*	*12,500,000]*
Newspapers	4,500,000	4,500,000	5,300,000	3,750,000
Periodicals	2,600,000	2,500,000	700,000	2,250,000
[News+Per. total	*7,100,000*	*7,000,000]*	*6,000,000*	*6,000,000]*
Official/Govt	1,200,000	1,500,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Broadcast	400,000	1,000,000	0	750,000
Websites	5,500,000	5,500,000	5,000,000	4,750,000
TOTALS	**30,200,000**	**30,000,000**	**25,000,000**	**25,000,000**

4 Encoding

Once a set of documents has been collected, a number of choices must be made and acted on before it is in an optimal state for use by linguists and lexicographers. We call this stage 'encoding'.

Encoding needs to be a goal-driven process. It is the goal of the exercise that defines what counts as a job well done. Our goals were to support (1) the lexicography for the NEID, and (2) research in Irish and Hiberno-English in general, with, as noted above, the corpus delivered both in XML and within the Sketch Engine. (The content of both versions would be the same.)

For the English side of the corpus, the relation between NCI and NCI+ (i.e. NCI plus BNC and Gigaword) was a particular challenge (see Fig. 1). The XML delivery related only to the NCI, but, for the Word Sketch Engine delivery, it had to be straightforward for users to query both Hiberno-English-only, and the whole English-language component. The encoding of the various components of the NCI, the BNC and the Gigaword needed unifying.

In this section, we discuss first, the encoding of the text; and then, the gathering and encoding of meta-information about each text, its 'header'.

4.1 Text encoding

For each of the documents we collected from publishers, once it had had its ID assigned and had been saved as raw text, we skimmed through the text in an editor. We counted words, and deleted parts of the text which were not suitable for a lexicographic corpus. The 'unsuitable parts' included, for books:

> title pages, tables of content and other tables, figures and diagrams, footnotes and endnotes, indexes, page headers and footers including running titles, mathematical and scientific formulae, extensive quotations and other sections in other languages, e.g. non-English for the English corpus and non-Irish for the Irish corpus.

From newspaper and magazine text we also removed:

> crosswords, TV listings, isolated names and addresses dates from advertisements, racing results, lists of team members etc.

Paragraph tags were then added semi-automatically based on hard returns in the text, which worked well for text types other than lists and poetry. Poetry and plays were identified, and XCES markup suitable to them was inserted. Symbols in the text such as "&", " < " and " > " which would interfere with XML validation were converted to XML entities, becoming "&", "<" and ">". Once this XML markup had been added, the document was 'topped and tailed' with suitable

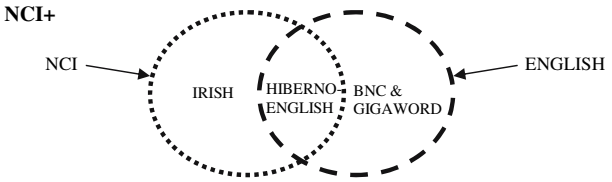

Fig. 1 NCI+ comprises the NCI (which has both Irish and Hiberno-English components) and additional English corpora

start- and end-tags, and then validated against the XCES DTD in an XML editor. The validation process often uncovered character-encoding issues, which were then fixed. (A similar 'cleaning' process for the web data is described above.)

To our surprise, the 'cleaning' removed an average of a third of the words in a text.

We then morphologically analyzed and part-of-speech-tagged the text. For English, we used existing tools. Although the BNC is published complete with part-of-speech tags, they are CLAWS-5 tags and we chose to standardize on the widely-used Penn tagset so we re-tagged the BNC as well as the other 125 M words. For Irish, we developed the tools in the project as described in Sect. 5.

4.2 Header encoding

The headers needed to give whatever information the user might need about a text, including feature-values which would potentially be used in corpus queries. They had to deal with all the very different NCI+ components in a single, consistent form, so the lexicographer did not need to remember that, for example, what the BNC called 'subject', the NCI called 'topic'. There were, of course, pragmatic constraints on how much detail could be provided about each text, given the number of documents and the scope and budget of the project.

In this section we first discuss the header design, then, how the values for each feature were identified for each corpus component, and then show how header information can be used in the Sketch Engine.

4.2.1 Header design

Within XCES, a document header (cesHeader element) is structured. In the input format for the Sketch Engine, it is an unstructured set of feature-value pairs. While NCI headers are XCES-compliant, and nomenclature is taken from XCES, we do not discuss the structure or other XML/XCES issues (or other bookkeeping features) here.

Header fields are of two kinds: 'free text' ones, and ones with a fixed set of possible values. The former are:

h.title, h.author, publisher, pubPlace, pubDate, author-birthplace, author-dob, author-residence

h.title and *h.author* are drawn from XCES and are the features XCES uses for simply stating the author and the title. They, and publication details, are standard bibliographic information. The three last features were only filled in for Irish books.

The fields with a fixed set of possible values are specified, with their possible values, in Table 4. For most features, values will not be specified for some documents, which is equivalent to them being given the value 'u' or 'unknown'.

4.2.2 Populating the headers

Once the header fields were defined, the next task was to establish the value for each, for each document. To record these details we set up a web database. The interface had

Table 4 NCI header fields with fixed sets of possible values

Feature	Values	Note
language	ga en	ISO 639 Language Codes
langvariety	ie br am	Hiberno/British/American: applies to English only
docid	unique 8-character document IDs	(see details above)
nativesp	y n u	applies to Irish only
nativesp-dialect	connacht munster ulster u	applies to Irish only
ie-region	n s e w u	applies to Hiberno-English only
translation	y n	applies to Irish only; default is 'n'
time	1883–1959 1960–1999 2000-on u	applies to Irish only
biog	yes no auto	applies to Irish only; default is 'no'
mode	written spoken	
medium	book newspaper magazine periodical acad-journal website-news website-other email-webchat dissertation official-govt unpublished ephemera broadcast-radio broadcast-tv conversation interview lecture meeting unknown	Used in defining target proportions; see Table 1; several values (e.g. email-webchat, dissertation) were unused.
genre	inf imag	All documents to receive a basic classification for genre. Used in defining target proportions; see Table 1.
genre2	fiction poetry drama non-fiction information instruction official unknown	A more fine-grained genre classification.
topic	hard-applied-science social-science govt politics history religion-philosophy business-finance arts-culture leisure geography health news legislation unknown	
targetreaders	general schools academic teenagers children adult-learner unknown	

a text-input box for each free-text field and a menu for each fixed-value-set field. The Document IDs served as primary keys.

A mapping table was produced which stated, for each component to NCI+ (eg BNC, Gigaword, PAROLE etc.) how each field was to be filled. For the books gathered from publishers, the instruction was usually just ''use manually-input data''. For some fields, the mapping was implicit in the component name: for all the Irish components, *language* was set to *ga* and for all the English components, to *en*; for all web documents the value for *medium* was *website*.

For the 'books' component of the NCI, header fields were filled manually; for the other parts, it was largely automatic. The database eventually held almost four thousand records. Approximately 400 Irish and 300 English were entered manually, the remainder automatically generated.

For the PAROLE, BNC and Gigaword components, the task was one of identifying where, if anywhere, the information required to fill an NCI+ header field was to be found in an existing corpus header.

It was necessary to fall back on 'defaults' and 'unknown' in various cases, particularly for the web and Gigaword material. However the basic information that, for example, Gigaword always had *lang=en, langvariety=a*, *genre=inf, medium=newspaper* is a large part of what is useful for lexicography.

The online database allowed all team members to check on a document at any time and records could easily be updated. This was particularly useful where details relating to the author and the text, such as author age and place of birth, only became available after further investigation. Updates to the permission status from copyright holders were maintained in the same way. The database provided a range of reports, which were critical for monitoring progress.

Procedures were written to transform database contents into XCES-compliant XML headers. The methodology thus combined using XML for data exchange with a relational databases and the SQL query language for distributed data input, progress-tracking, and the ability to perform bulk updates.

4.2.3 Subcorpora in the sketch engine

The Sketch Engine has a 'Create Subcorpus' function. Once the user has created and named a subcorpus, they can specify it and then search within it. Thus, in the NEID project, where lexicographers have a suspicion that an English word behaves differently in Ireland to elsewhere, they will be able to set the corpus to ''Hiberno-English only'' and examine its behaviour there. If they wish to contrast an Irish word's use pre- and post-1960, they can do this by first setting up two subcorpora and then searching each in turn.

The Sketch Engine interface for creating a subcorpus, as it appears when the corpus is the English component of the NCI+, is shown in Fig. 2.

The numbers given are numbers of words in each component, and are relative to the specified corpus which has been selected, so if a subcorpus (like Hiberno-English) has been selected, then the numbers will be the numbers of Hiberno-English words in each component.

5 Irish linguistic tools

In order to linguistically annotate Irish, we needed a morphological analyzer and a part-of-speech tagger. For Irish word sketches, we needed in addition to specify grammatical relations for Irish.

Irish has complex morphology. It is an inflectional language in which nouns have gender (masculine or feminine) and are inflected for number and case. Nominative, accusative and dative cases share the form in Modern Irish and are called ''common'' case in the current encoding following ''New Irish Grammar'' (Christian Brothers, 1980). There is also genitive case, vocative case and some fossilised dative case forms. Adjectives agree with nouns in terms of gender, number and case, and verbs are inflected for tense, mood, person and number. There are morphosyntactic dependencies whereby the initial phoneme of a word mutates depending on the previous word and certain lexical properties of the current word, such as gender and stem type. In example (1) we see that the feminine noun *bean* 'woman' changes to *bhean* following the definite article, but this only occurs in the case of feminine nouns. Example (2) shows a similar mutation occurring when a verb form is preceded by a negative particle.

a. ***b***ean ''a woman'' (there is no indefinite article in Irish)
b. *an* ***bh***ean ''the woman'' (1)

a. ***c***eannaim ''I buy''
b. *ni* ***ch***eannaim ''I do not buy'' (2)

Irish also contains consonant harmony whereby a broad suffix goes with a broad stem and slender suffixes with slender stems. In some cases (3a & b) the suffix varies

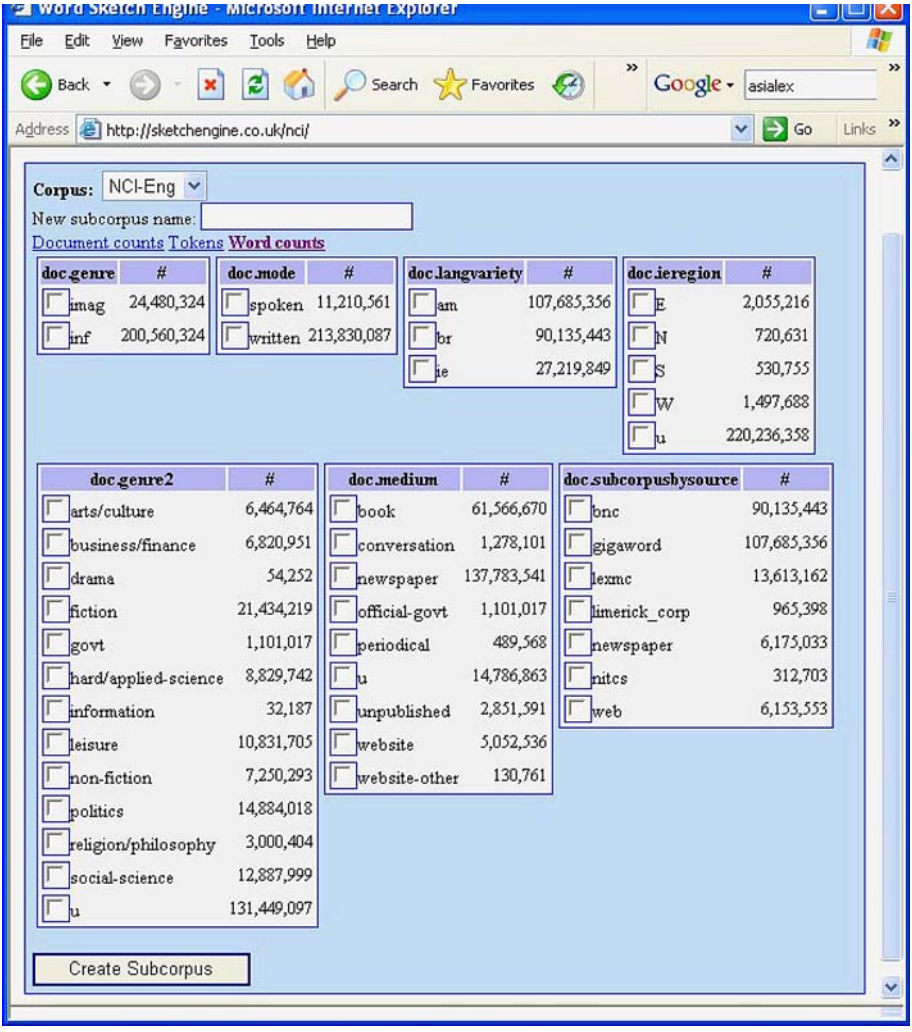

Fig. 2 Word Sketch Engine 'create subcorpus' interface, looking at the English part of NCI+

and in others (3c) the stem changes to preserve this harmony. This is shown orthographically by the vowels accompanying the consonants.

a. *carr* ''a car'' (singular), *carr**anna***''cars'' (broad pl. suffix)
b. *méid*''an amount'' (sg.), *méid**eanna***''amounts'' (slender pl. suffix)
c. *rud* ''a thing'' (sg.), *ru**i**dí**n*** ''a little thing'' (stem is slenderised to accommodateslender suffix.) (3)

In choosing a tagging methodology, we considered existing resources and how best to use them.

- A tagset for Irish had been developed within the PAROLE project, by members of the NCI team (http://www.ite.ie/corpus/pos.htm)
- A pilot finite-state tokenizer and morphological transducer for Irish inflectional morphology had been developed (Uí Dhonnchadha, 2002; Uí Dhonnchadha, Nic Pháidín, & Van Genabith, 2003).
- We established that a constraint based tagger[9] was available to us

The approach would all be finite state. We would perform morphological analysis on the text. The morphological analyzer outputs all of the possible lemma and tag combinations for a particular token. Constraint Grammar rules would then be applied to this output in order to choose the appropriate analysis for the wordform based on its context in the sentence.

The Parole tagset, in which tags comprise up to nine characters each representing a linguistic feature, allows for the expression of all linguistic features which are salient for Irish morphology. In (4) the Parole tag for ''bháisteach'' is Ncfsc where N=noun, c=common, f=feminine, s=singular and c=common case.

<w tag=''Ncfsc'' base=''b*á*isteach''>bh*á*isteach</w> (4)

Internally, the formalism used was a more explicit notational variant of the Parole tagset in which each feature is represented by a short name, as in the example (5) below.

''<bh*á*isteach>'' ''b*á*isteach'' Noun Fem Com Sg Len (5)

5.1 Tool development

Table 5 shows the sequence of processing stages. We then describe the development of tools for each step for Irish.

5.1.1 Tokenization and morphological analysis

The existing tokenizer and morphological analyzer/generator for Irish (Uí Dhonn chadha, 2002) was built using Xerox Finite-State Tools (Karttunen & Beesley, 1992; Beesley & Karttunen, 2003). This lexical transducer implemented the inflectional

[9] Constraint Grammar vislcg downloadable at http://www.sourceforge.net

Table 5 Text processing steps

Processing Stage	Output
1. Tokenization	Tokenised Text
2. Morphological Analysis	Multiple Lemma/Tag choices
3. Constraint Grammar Disambiguation	POS and Lemmatized Text
4. XML Formatting	XCES POS and Lemmatized Text
5. Binary Encoding for Corpus Query System	Binary corpus data
6. Grammatical Relations for CQS	Word Sketches

rules for Irish and contained a test lexicon of approximately 1500 lemmas, which included the 1000 most frequently occurring word-forms in the PAROLE corpus. Its recognition rate was on average 85% on unrestricted text.

In order to achieve accurate POS tagging the recognition rates needed to be increased

substantially. This was achieved by

- increasing the lexicon
- adding derivational and compounding morphology rules and
- implementing morphological guessers.

The lexicon was increased by semi-automatically converting a 15,000 word pocket Irish-English dictionary (An Roinn Oideachais, 1986) to Xerox *lexc* format. As newspaper and web texts in particular contain a high proportion of proper nouns, lists of names and places were also scanned and incorporated into the lexicon (Uí Dhonnchadha et al., 2003). Average recognition rates increased to 95% on unrestricted text.

As many words are derived by affixing prefixes and/or suffixes to existing stems, the lexical transducer was augmented by including 150 common prefixes and some derivational suffixes which can be concatenated to nouns, verbs and adjectives as appropriate. New rules were included for the morphological changes which occur at affix-stem junction.

A lexicon of approx 20K Irish items is still modest, and a method was also needed for dealing with unrecognised words. This function was implemented as a series of morphological guessers (Beesley & Karttunen, 2003, p444) which make use of the distinctive suffixes, syllable structure, initial capitals and particular characters in the token to identify verbs, adjective, proper nouns, nouns and foreign words. The guessers were applied in order to the remaining 5% of tokens, first checking to see if an unknown word could be a verb, and if that failed, then, an adjective, and so on until a possible analysis succeeds. This provided a high degree of accuracy in selecting the part-of-speech, and ensured that every token received a morphological analysis. However the lemmas tended to be unreliable due to the changes which most stems undergo when combined with an affix. Further work in this area could prove fruitful.

The following is a sample of output after tokenization and morphological analysis has been applied to the phrase ''*Thá inig an bháisteach*'' (The rain came).

```
"<Thái nig>"
        "tar" Verb PastInd Neg Len
        "tar" Verb PastInd Len
    "<an>"
        "an" Art Sg Def
        "an" Part Vb Q Cond
        "an" Part Vb Q Fut
        "an" Part Vb Q Past
        "an" Part Vb Q Pres
        "is" Cop Pres Q
        "is" Cop Pres Dep Q
"<bháisteach>"
        "báisteach" Noun Fem Voc Sg Len
        "báisteach" Noun Fem Com Sg DefArt
        "báisteach" Noun Fem Com Sg Len
        "báisteach" Verbal Noun Len
```

(6)

5.1.2 Constraint grammar disambiguation

As we see, each token is ambiguous: more that one morphological analysis is possible. For the disambiguation, or part-of-speech tagging, we used Constraint Grammar (CG) (Tapanainen, 1996; Karlsson, Voutilainen, Heikkilä, & Anttila, 1995). We developed CG rules for Irish and applied them to the output of the analyzer.

CG operates at sentence level. Each token in the sentence has a cohort consisting of all the possible readings (lemmas and morphological analyses) for that token. CG has two basic types of rule; 'select' and 'remove' The input is disambiguated by either *selecting* one reading from a cohort based on the context to the left and/or right of the token or by *removing* impossible readings based on the context. Example (7a) shows a rule where the article reading is selected if the following token is an unambiguously a noun, and in (7b) a negative verb form reading is removed if the previous token is not a negative verbal particle. In (7c) we may select the form of a noun which follows an article if the previous token is unambiguously an article.

```
a. SELECT (Art) IF (1C (Noun));
b. REMOVE (Verb Neg) IF (NOT -1C (Part Vb Neg));
c. SELECT (Noun DefArt) IF (-1C (Art));
```

(7)

In this manner we achieve the following unambiguous analysis for the previous example:

```
"<Thá inig>"
    "tar" Verb PastInd Len
"<an>"                                    (8)
    "an" Art Sg Def
"<bhá isteach>"
    "bá isteach" Noun Fem Com Sg DefArt
```

At the end of the one-year project approximately 250 CG rules were encoded and the target accuracy of 95% was achieved for part-of-speech tagging. Work will continue on the development and testing of CG rules in order to increase the accuracy of the tagger.[10]

5.1.3 XML formatting of linguistic markup

The disambiguated output is then converted to XCES format using the word tags < w > and the *tag* and *base* attribute/value pairs.

The following shows the XCES markup for our earlier snippet of text in (8):

```
<w tag="Vmip" base="tar">Thá inig</w>
<w tag="Td" base="an">an</w>                (9)
<w tag="Ncfsc" base="bá isteach">bhá isteach</w>
```

5.1.4 Grammatical relations

Grammatical relations are specified using the CQP query language developed at the University of Stuttgart (Schulze & Christ, 1994). This is an extended regular expression formalism, which supports regular expressions both at the level of the character and at the level of the word. Associated with each word there may be additional fields of information (for example, the lemma and the part-of-speech tag) and these can be accessed in Boolean combinations with the wordform.

Complex queries can be built from simpler ones, by first assigning names to simple expressions and then using these names to build more sophisticated ones: for this we use the m4 definition language. For example in (10) "any_noun" is defined as the set of tags starting with N and followed by at least 1 and up to 6 characters. In (11) verb forms which are inflected for person and number are characterised as having tags starting with V followed by 3 characters and having a person indicator 1, 2 or 3 in the fifth position (and, optionally, contain up to 4 more characters).

```
define('any_noun', "'N.{1,6}"')                    (10)
define('verb_incl_subj', "'V.?.?.?.[1-3].{0,4}"')  (11)
```

[10] For alternative work on Irish grammar checking see: http://borel.slu.edu/gramadoir/

Irish has verb-subject-object (VSO) word order and adjectives follow nouns. The following is an example of grammatical relation for expressing the relation object of verb.

```
=object
        1:verb_incl_subj any_adv{0,1} 2:np
```

Here, the first argument of the grammatical relation called *object* is the item prefixed by ''1:'' and the second if the item prefixed by ''2:''. The main line of the definition then reads: ''wherever we find a *verb_incl_subj*, followed by 0 or 1 *any_adv*s and then an *np*, we have identified a grammatical relation of type object, first argument *verb_incl_subj* and second argument *np*.

5.1.5 Summary

During the project the tokenizer and morphological analyzer were extended both in terms of rules and lexicon and brought from a pilot system with 85% coverage to a fully functional system with 95% coverage on unrestricted text. This was complemented with morphological guessers which give an analysis for the remaining 5% of unknown tokens (see Uí Dhonnchadha & Van Genabith, 2005 for further details).

Part-of-speech disambiguation was addressed through the development of Constraint Grammar rules for Irish. The project goal of 95% accuracy for part-of-speech tagging was achieved.

The grammatical relations were modelled on those already in use for English in the Sketch Engine. The completeness and appropriateness of this set for Irish will only become apparent when lexicographers begin to use them in the lexicography phase of the project.

6 Project team and resources

Developing the NCI required a range of talents. We list here the different roles, with a brief note of responsibilities and, as a guideline to others planning comparable projects, the total amount of time spent on the project.

Role	Responsible for	Approx time spent
Corpus Development Manager	Identifying and acquiring texts and permissions; bibliographic data.	9 person-months
Corpus Processing Manager	General; Irish linguistic tools	9 person-months
Infogistics Ltd: web specialists	Collecting and encoding web corpus	6 person-months
Senior Irish linguist	Reviewing Irish web data and linguistic tools	1 person-month
Student interns; corpus 'cleaners'	Manual text cleanup, header input	18 person-months
Systems administrator	Intranet, web database etc	0.5 person –months
Computational Linguist	Corpus encoding	3 person months

Michael Rundell was in overall charge of design and collection issues, while Adam Kilgarriff oversaw the text-processing and encoding operations. This represented a total of around six person-months of management input.

7 Further plans

As currently configured, the NCI is a well-balanced and well-annotated corpus, representing a wide range of text-types, and we believe it will form a sound basis both for the English-Irish dictionary and for Foras na Gaeilge's longer-term publishing programme. We anticipate enhancements of these resources in the coming months and years, in terms both of data and linguistic annotation, to include:

- ''classic'' literary sources: a significant number of books by important and highly-regarded Irish-language writers do not currently exist in electronic form (having been published mainly during the first half of the 20th century): a scanning programme to capture this body of literature would add valuable new data to the NCI.
- untapped spoken data: Ireland is blessed with large archives of recorded speech dating back over 70 years but, to date, very little of this material has been transcribed. One such archive, that of Raidió na Gaeltachta, has many hundreds of hours of recordings. This represents a valuable linguistic and cultural resource, which it would be desirable to add to the NCI.
- improved linguistic tools for Irish: the time available in the current project for developing and refining the Irish linguistic tools was limited. While current performance figures are satisfactory for lexicographic purposes, they could be further improved. We hope that resources will be made available, and that any improvements will be fed back into the NCI through re-lemmatizing and POS-tagging the Irish data with improved tools

There is planned to be a new Irish-to-English dictionary in due course, and we would hope that project would be associated with a re-examination of corpus requirements. Extensive coverage of Irish literature is of limited significance to an English-to-Irish dictionary, but would play an important role in the analysis of the Irish language required for an Irish-to-English one.

8 Conclusion

The project has successfully gathered a high-quality corpus of substantial size from a wide range of sources, in just over a year and with modest resources. The corpus was designed primarily to meet the lexicographic requirements of an English-to-Irish dictionary, but with an eye to the resource being used more widely, by scholars of Irish and Hiberno-English. Three routes were followed for collecting data: (1) using data from existing corpora, (2) approaching copyright holders, and (3) harvesting the web. Each raised assorted issues, and each plays an important role in the resulting corpus.

We established and implemented policies for data encoding, and in this paper we address in some detail questions such as

- which parts of web pages and newspapers should be retained?
- how should duplication be addressed?
- What information about each text (its header) is required, and how can it be gathered and standardized?

We have shown how the encoding of the corpus feeds into lexicography. Lexicographers are best supported by a linguistically-aware corpus query tool, and that will require a linguistically-annotated corpus. Such tools are readily available for English, but were not, at the outset of the project, for Irish, so, we developed and extended tools for the morphological analysis and part-of-speech tagging of Irish within the project: we would encourage others, when working with a language where tools are currently limited in scope or non-existent, to do likewise.

We believe that many of the procedures outlined here can be applied in order to rapidly and inexpensively gather corpora for other smaller languages.

8.1 Corpus access

All enquiries regarding access to the corpus should be addressed to Foras na Gaeilge, 6 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, Ireland.

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