

Foreword

“The times they are a-changing”¹ sings an acclaimed Poet Laureate of our times. There is no denying it, the physical and social world around us is moving and changing at a very fast pace, affecting individuals and societies, politics and governments, and, eventually, languages. Power relationships within and between languages are changing; languages are migrating, physically, with the people who speak them, or virtually, through technology. If, in the words of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921), “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”², our increasingly multilingual society is rapidly expanding these limits.

The articles, project reports and book reviews featured in this Issue 26 of TEANGA show the considerable extent to which the IRAAL journal has its finger on the pulse of the linguistic and societal changes occurring on both the Irish and international scene, and does so by showcasing the most current research in our field. Reading through the issue, one can’t help but notice how closely its leitmotif aligns with the theme of this year’s IRAAL conference: *‘Threatening’ Languages in a Global World*, whose double-entendre title brilliantly captures the complexity of the ever-shifting language landscapes in our globalised society. In a global world, communities of minority and of heritage language speakers are actively engaged in preserving (and affirming) their culture and their language. Multilingualism is actively supported by the European Union through funding and directives. At the same time, the globally accepted status of English as a Lingua Franca has radically changed how any language other than English is perceived by society and by its governing bodies. This is resulting in significant decisions on the part of governments and/or educational institutions that have an impact on the extent and choice in the offer of foreign language learning or on the status of national languages. Such a brief and wide bird’s eye view can but scratch the surface of the many layers of complexity that form the linguistic landscape around us, which is also impacted on by momentous political changes such as Brexit. It is thus not surprising that the field of research in Language Policy creation, interpretation, appropriation, and instantiation is experiencing a new impetus, which in Ireland has spurred research on *Languages Connect*, Ireland’s strategy for foreign languages in education. Many of these social, cultural, historical, and linguistic transformations are reflected in the research featured in Issue 26, which paints a composite picture of language-related issues and concerns, and of the work embarked on by applied linguists to analyse and tackle such issues and concerns.

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¹ Bob Dylan, *The times they are a-changing*, 1963.

² [5. 6 Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt]. Wittgenstein, L. (1922) *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung/Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, New York: Routledge, p.148.