



**Centre for Deaf Studies,
School of Linguistics, Speech and Communication Sciences,
University of Dublin, Trinity College**

Public Lecture Series 2010 - 11

Summary of Finnish and Irish Sign Languages: an egalitarian analysis of language policies and their effects

Dr. John Bosco Conama

Thursday, November 18th, 2010.

7.30 pm to 9.30 pm

Maxwell Hall, Hamilton Buildings, Trinity College.

ISL / English Interpretation will be provided.

Biography:

John Bosco Conama (Ph.D, M.Litt, BA),

Was the former chairperson of the Irish Deaf Society, and is Higher Executive Officer in the Training Branch of the Revenue Commissioners (now on a career leave). He has been involved in many committees and working groups within the Irish Civil Service, other Government bodies and non-governmental bodies to monitor the progress of Deaf people in society. His recent publications have focused on Deaf people in society, for instance the level of poverty within the Deaf community. He also chaired the accreditation process for ISL/English interpreters twice and under the aegis of Irish Sign Link in 2006 and Sign Language Interpreting Agency (SLIS) in 2009. He is also still actively involved in the Irish Sign Language Academy.

Abstract:

The presentation is based on the successful completion of the doctoral research. The aim of this research is to advance academic understanding of what equality of condition (Baker, *et al*, 2004) would mean for Deaf people in relation to the recognition of signed language in both education and access to information in particular. It set out to test the hypothesis that the social model of disability is necessary but not sufficient for realising equality of condition for Deaf people because it does not take sufficient account of the importance of either culture or language to Deaf people. Deaf communities identify the status of their signed languages as the indicators of their social standings therefore egalitarian measures must be intertwined with the status of signed languages (Lane *et al* 1996, Ladd, 2003, Batterbury *et al*, 2007, Bauman, 2008, Emery 2009)

To achieve its goals, a comparative study of signed language policies and practices in both Finland and Ireland was undertaken, two countries that are seen to be more advanced (Finland) and less advanced (Ireland) in terms of the equality of condition for Deaf people. The goal was to establish if Finland had actually moved towards equality of condition by comparison with Ireland with respect to the education and public information access of Deaf people.

This study proposes that a Deafhood framework should be applied to guide the language policy orientation in order to achieve the equality of condition for the Irish Deaf community. The concept of Deafhood was first termed by Ladd (2003) though its practices and norms are used for decades.

Directions to reach the Maxwell Hall



- The Maxwell Hall is in the Hamilton Buildings, back of Trinity College
- Entrance can be gained through four gates: Front Gate, Nassau Street, Lincoln Place, Westland Row and Pearse Street.