

LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND DIVERSE LEGACIES: QUESTION OF CONFIDENCE

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SYNOPSIS

In general, Scots have not shown an excess of confidence in their potential to learn languages. A school system which did not previously encourage the majority to study languages, but reserved them for a certain academic elite, has undoubtedly played its part in this. A study of a group of Open University language learners supports the view that it is mainly those with considerable school experience of language learning, and strong present links with the language who have the confidence and motivation to enter and remain in the adult language learning arena. Yet, Scotland has a rich historic and current multilingual profile which largely goes untapped and which could be of great benefit in raising language awareness and confidence about language learning. In a devolved Scotland, it now seems appropriate to widen participation, to make language learning a more inclusive domain, and to rekindle a previously discouraged polyglot mentality. An ideal opportunity presents itself to introduce new policies which would reverse negative cultural and educational legacies and enhance confidence in language identity and language learning potential. This would provide the means to a healthier and more open cultural and social dialogue, ensuring the democratic future of Scotland in the world at large.

LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THE CULTURAL INHERITANCE OF SCOTLAND

In Scotland, the national attitude towards language learning, if such an artificial stereotype may be temporarily constructed, has historically appeared to be somewhat dispirited and disaffected in nature, the intrinsic value of acquiring another language often questioned and the performance potential often doubted. Like other English speakers, some Scots undoubtedly feel that there is no pressing, practical need for them to learn another language for the often cited reason that most people in their own and other countries speak some English. If they do have to use another language when abroad, this may be confined to transactional exchanges in shops, banks, and restaurants. In this sense, the legacy of political, cultural and social domination of English, what John Edwards terms a 'big' language¹ has become complete.

We might also reflect on a psycho-linguistic reason for Scots' attitude to language learning. Attainment in second language learning has been linked by theorists² to levels of confidence. We could also suggest that confidence actually comes into play at a much earlier stage and that it can be linked to the belief in one's capacity to undertake language study in the first place. Edwards has suggested that 'in the modern world English and American monolinguals ... often complain that they have no aptitude for foreign-language learning.'³ This lack of belief in language learning potential has been particularly marked among Scots. How often do we hear the refrain 'I was no good at languages at school' from adult Scots? In the writer's experience, many Scottish schoolchildren demonstrate preconceived notions about foreign language learning, often derived from elder siblings, that 'languages are not for us', or 'languages are difficult', even before they have any direct contact with the subject. As a result, they have been drawn into a self-fulfilling prophecy with regard to language learning. This may stem from the fact that Scots are aware or are made aware, as are other English speakers, that they have to grapple with more complex grammatical and structural issues (gender, agreement, word order for

example) than do foreign counterparts learning English, as Richard Johnstone⁴ points out. However, the educational establishment's role in sustaining such beliefs must also be the subject of focus, for it could be mooted that it has bolstered a language learning ethos whose hallmark is a singular lack of confidence. Language learning has historically been reserved for an elite group of so-called 'academic' pupils. As late as 1988, a report from the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum⁵, to which language professionals contributed, did not advocate the introduction of languages for all beyond Secondary Two, despite the fact that this policy was clearly out-of-step with most other European countries. Languages were not integrated in the core curriculum to Secondary Four until the early nineties. Even then, their introduction caused dismay among certain tiers of the educational hierarchy, who along with some language teachers, lacked conviction that languages should be taught to all ability levels to the age of sixteen.

We might reasonably conclude that a dominant tendency towards acceptance of a monoglot mentality has prevailed in many quarters. Yet, ironically enough, Scotland has never in reality been locked into monoglot territory either in linguistic or cultural terms. A considerable number of Scots, whether or not of bilingual status themselves, have historically been exposed to a bilingual⁶ ethos in respect of Gaelic, Lallans or Doric, either because of where they live or through family connections. While data remain elusive, recent sample surveys carried out by General Register House⁷ estimate that 30 per cent of the population would respond 'Yes' when asked 'Can you speak Scots or a dialect of Scots?' The 1991 census indicated that 1.3 per cent of the population of 3 years of age plus could speak, read or write Scots Gaelic. This figure does not take account of those who have knowledge of Gaelic but would not answer 'yes' to such a question because they are not of 'native' standard: second and third generation offspring of Gaels for example. Within this century, the addition of new generations of Scots whose mother tongue may be Italian, Urdu, Punjabi, Cantonese, Polish, or Ukrainian, has extended the linguistic parameters within Scotland. It is difficult to secure official statistics on the mother tongue status of all residents in Scotland, for neither the Office of Statistics, General Register House, nor the Racial Equality Commission hold such data. Ken MacKinnon's work from 1991 census information on ethnic origin⁸ estimates that around 95,000 of Scotland's population speak a language *other* than English, Gaelic or Scots as their first language. All of which goes to support Edwards' statement that:

'To be bilingual or multilingual is not the aberration supposed by many (particularly, perhaps, by people in Europe and North America who speak a 'big' language); it is rather, a normal and unremarkable necessity for the majority in the world today.'⁹

With regard to language attainment John Clark has suggested that:

'... it is entirely understandable that bilinguals do well, since an experience of two languages, and of the different ways that each encodes reality, is likely to lead to greater awareness as to the nature of language, than will monolingual experience.'¹⁰

If Scotland has failed to recognise, let alone promote its actual or potential polyglot ethos, it is hardly surprising that there is limited self-belief in Scots' language learning potential. Clark must have recognised this when he worked within the Scottish system. This stems from the more fundamental issue that the language profile has not been officially regarded as an important component of the individual's identity within Scotland. Indeed, apart from a few often stereotypical or erroneous representations of Gaelic and Scots, nor has it been a major part of community or national identity. Further, the suggestion that a question about mother tongue status should appear in

the 2001 census has not been adopted as necessary to create a picture of identity for the new millennium. The linguistic domination of English, rooted in both political and social hierarchies appears to continue.

SURVEY OF OPEN UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE STUDENTS

As a first step in assessing what educational, cultural or family legacies had initiated, maintained, discouraged or revived confidence in language learning, a small-scale qualitative study was undertaken among some 1998 OU language students. The results under discussion relate to the 43 Scots-educated respondents, whose dates of birth spanned 1911-1970. The majority were born in the 1941-1970 period (see Table 1). Just over half the respondents were in paid employment: 18 in professional or managerial jobs, 4 in clerical or technical posts and 3 in civil or public service. A quarter were now retired. Age and employment status for this group squared with the overall profile across OU language students at large.¹¹

Table 1: Date of birth of respondents

Date of Birth	Total number	Male	Female	Gender unknown
1911-20	1	1	0	0
1921-30	3	2	1	0
1931-40	6	4	2	0
1941-50	13	10	3	0
1951-60	12	6	5	1
1961-70	7	2	3	2
1971-80	1	0	1	0

The first half of the questionnaire was concerned with establishing a factual profile of the group linked to mother tongue status, schooling and contact with languages outside school when growing up. The latter half examined motivational issues linked to factors which might have affected attitude to language learning and current reasons for language study.

LANGUAGE STATUS

In this category we aimed to gain a sense of the extent to which bilingualism or exposure to other languages had impacted upon students in their youth. Respondents were asked to give their mother tongue language, then to indicate if they were of bilingual/multilingual status. In fact, 37 of the 43 were monolingual English mother tongue speakers. Only six respondents were linked to a polyglot background: one giving both Lallans and English as mother tongue, two Doric, one German, one Scots and one both Scots and English. A sixth cited Banffshire dialect as the 'home' language, but nonetheless gave English as the mother tongue.

We discern issues of confidence linked to indigenous tongue emerging here. For example, neither the speaker of Banffshire dialect nor three of the speakers of Scots went on to classify themselves as bilingual, although they were clearly speakers of English as well. This might allow us to ponder on two things. First, in the case of Scots language, is there still the belief, even within the psyche of speakers themselves, that it is simply a variation of English and not a separate language in its own right? Secondly, is it the case that they consider the adjective 'bilingual' to be a linguistically eclectic term, reserved for those whose 'other' language is

foreign rather than 'indigenous'? If the answer to both questions is yes, then such feelings would seem to arise from an educational, political and social situation in which the diversity of native tongues and dialects within Scotland has not only been underplayed but also undervalued. The consistent general use in Britain of the adjective 'foreign' when referring to other languages allows no room for the concept that a variety may already exist on home territory. Standard English has been the only acceptable norm, to be attained at any costs to ensure social and educational progression, as the speaker of Banffshire dialect highlights:

Banffshire dialect was spoken at 'home' (my parents and relatives). The fishing villages each had their own easily identifiable accent as well as some local words if only one mile apart. A form of 'doctored' dialect cum-standard English with suitably broadened vowels was acceptable with childhood friends (from age 4). I chose not to speak 'Aberdeen'. I had a happy childhood but rejected and overlooked the local language. From an unremembered age I was aware of my parents' and relatives' efforts to speak standard English if, for example, they were approached for directions by an English-speaking visitor, I copied. With my teachers my English improved.'

Edwards talks of the 'linguistic myopia' at the seat of power which brings such situations about and which is 'accompanied by a narrow cultural awareness and ... reinforced by state policies which, in the main, elevate only one language to official status.'¹² Those who are bilingual or who speak dialectal variants have, historically, been made to feel less than proud of their bi-lingual status. As the speaker from Banffshire indicates, they have amended their linguistic identity and by implication their cultural and therefore social identity in order to meet an externally imposed norm. This creates as early as childhood the inevitable dichotomy which has long existed in the psyche of many Scottish children, who, according to James Scotland:

'had one language, one set of values, one code of conduct for the school, others for what they regarded as the real world.'¹³

It is also interesting to note that, despite the OU's wide-reaching network, there were no native Gaelic speakers amongst the respondents. Two respondents were working within a bilingual context, learning Gaelic in order to support a child and grandchild in Gaelic medium education. This is indicative of a turnaround in the natural passage of language between generations, where non-Gaelic speaking parents are choosing Gaelic medium education for their offspring, in order to expose them to a bilingual ethos.

In the earlier part of the twentieth century, Gaelic speakers were banned from speaking their own language in the playground, and, with the exception of a minority, were certainly not educated either in or through the medium of their own language. Speakers of Scots and Gaelic did not use their mother tongue in the classroom or within officialdom as the above quotation illustrates. Only in 1998 did Gaelic achieve a measure of official status in political terms, too late for many of those who had helplessly watched the decline of their mother tongue. Yet, as Peter Trudgill has pointed out 'value judgements concerning the correctness and purity of linguistic varieties are social rather than linguistic'¹⁴ For no absolute linguistic classification can in fact exist, and a linguistic hierarchy only artificially constructed as a result of social hierarchy. Nonetheless, as Trudgill further notes, political decisions have been based on this false ordering:

'irrational attitudes and discriminatory decisions, often made by governments or other official bodies, acting out of ignorance or prejudice, have led to language policies which have had detrimental effects on children's education and even on societies as a whole'¹⁵

This inevitably impinges not just upon the perceived status of mother tongue language, the confidence levels of speakers of indigenous languages, but also upon the place of languages in the curriculum and their teaching, as the comments in the next section will demonstrate.

Confidence was however apparent from a respondent with mother tongue Scots, who wanted to reinforce the point that it must indeed be seen as a separate language: ‘Scots is a distinct language, NOT an English dialect and is recognised as such by the EU and the UN.’

STUDY OF LANGUAGES AT SCHOOL/CONTACT WITH LANGUAGES OUTSIDE SCHOOL WHEN GROWING UP

In this category we aimed to assess if a certain profile of schooling was in evidence. All but two of the 43 respondents indicated that they had studied a language at school, 38 for three years or more, 24 of them, i.e. more than half the respondent group, for 5-7 years. Indeed 29 had studied more than one language, while 10 had studied three or more languages (see Table 2). The fact that 32 of the 35 state-educated respondents had studied languages for 3 or more years, 18 of them having studied languages for between 5-7 years, indicates that, given the historical context, we are dealing with those who were in certificate streams in senior secondary schools. They had been encouraged or been expected to choose a language option with a view to the leaving certificate and university entrance, which allows us to reasonably conclude that they were already part of an educational elite following an essentially classical humanist pattern of schooling.

Table 2: Language combinations taken at school

French only	11
French and Latin	11
French and German	8
German and Latin	1
French, German and Latin	7
French, Russian and Latin	1
French, German, Spanish and Latin	2
No languages	1
No data	1

This is confirmed by the fact that 22 had studied Latin. Peter Skehan has offered the view that:

‘motivation might be influenced by the success experienced by learners (the Resultative hypothesis). Those learners who do well experience reward and are encouraged to try harder: learners who do not do so well are discouraged by their lack of success, and, as a result, lack persistence.’¹⁶

If motivation is as much a consequence as a cause of success, then we can reasonably assume that the respondent group had a moderately successful school background in languages which boosted confidence and eased entry into adult language learning later in life. In turn, success in OU language studies seems to have motivated them to continue further. Well over a half of the respondent group had studied more

than one OU language course, while almost a third had studied three courses. In addition, 31 respondents indicated an interest in learning another language, while 18 are also engaged with other providers in language study not currently available with the OU.

We can suggest the emergence of a behavioural pattern: those who study languages to a certain level and to a certain degree of success at school tend to study more. This is confirmed by the fact that, 25 respondents, across all age groups, indicated that they had no contact at all with languages outside school when growing up, yet continued their school language study even though it was operating within a personal, academic vacuum. Schooling thus emerged as being central to the issue of confidence.

FACTORS AFFECTING ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGE LEARNING

Although much academic debate surrounds the word ‘attitude’ in such surveys, it is the everyday use of the term which concerns us here. In order to ascertain what the most powerful legacies are and what can reinforce or reverse these, respondents were asked to indicate which of six categories might have affected or still affect their attitude, motivation or confidence levels regarding languages or language learning, and to what degree (see Table 3).

Table 3: Factors affecting attitude to language learning

Category	Number (%) citing category as a factor	Negative effect 1-5 on scale	Positive effect 6-10 on scale
Schooling	36 (84%)	16 (37%)	20 (47%)
Visits to areas/ countries where other language(s) spoken	34 (79%)	2 (5%)	32 (74%)
Contact with speakers of other language(s)	28 (65%)	2 (5%)	26 (60%)
Media	18 (42%)	3 (7%)	15 (35%)
Family	17 (40%)	6 (14%)	11 (26%)
Other	15 (35%)	0 (0%)	12 (28%)

Schooling

Given the large amount of school language learning experience among this group, it was hardly surprising that this emerged as a forceful influence cited by 36 respondents, 20 positively, 16 negatively. Those who studied more languages for longer had a more positive attitude to schooling. Most linked this to inspired or encouraging teaching:

‘Enthusiastic and committed teachers.’

‘Most teachers were dedicated and kind and my regret is that I did not work harder for them.’

‘Encouragement from teachers, particularly my Latin teacher.’

‘good teaching and thorough grounding in grammar and pronunciation.’

Teaching methods and teacher attitudes also figured among the *negative* comments:

‘Teacher mocked efforts when I was speaking French.’

‘One year with undermining and bullying teacher. 2 years with poor teacher near retirement and out of date teaching material and techniques.’

‘Too little emphasis on speaking/conversational skills.’

‘Languages were taught very rigidly, with a lot of emphasis on writing and grammar. I feel I got on well with languages despite the school, not because of it.’

‘We were not encouraged to speak with a French accent- in fact I don’t think I imagined I would ever be in France. It was just a subject I had to pass to get my leaving certificate.’¹⁷

This had not, however, deterred them from language study in later life. This may have at least two origins. As we have seen, the number of years of school language study up until 1990 suggests a measure of success irrespective of lack of enjoyment, which may, as Skehan posits, enhance motivation and maintain confidence for further study. Secondly, other factors, such as travel or contact with speakers of other languages, have outweighed any negative experience gained at school and thus enhanced confidence. Indeed one student indicated that the reason for studying languages now was ‘a challenge to overcome my schooling and what I perceived to be my worst subject/ability/skill.’

Family

Under half of the respondent group (17) indicated that this category had been a factor in their attitude to language/language learning. This may suggest a low importance accorded to the matter within the English-speaking home in general. Where further comments were offered, 11 linked this specifically to parental factors, 8 in a positive way:

‘parental pressure to have another language encouraged me to learn at school.’

‘they [parents] were pleased, even proud, that I was in language classes.’

‘Both my parents could speak a foreign language and they actively encouraged my interest in languages from an early age.’

Of the three who offered comments on their negative ratings, two had suffered from a discouraging view on the part of parents:

‘no interest [parents] in foreign languages/culture.’

‘my mother encouraged me towards science thinking it had good career prospects, she disdained the study of Latin.’

However, a counterbalancing family influence remained equally strong for this student:

‘Though I never met her, a cousin of my mother had been recognised as having considerable linguistic skill and had screened refugees during World War 2. I still remember the thrill and inspiration that story gave me.’

One respondent, however, had found parental *favouring* of language study to be a negative factor:

‘choice made by parents to take a second language – discouraged from taking engineering.’

Media

Respondents who cited this factor generally linked it to motivational factors. They wanted to be better able to understand foreign press, and TV and radio broadcasts. Two specifically mentioned cable television as a factor in their desire to improve understanding. One respondent, however, was keen to point out that the skills of those from other nations who broadcast in English were an influencing factor and that they 'should inspire lazy English native speakers.'

Visits to Areas/Countries where Language Spoken/Contact with Speakers of the Language

This was the second most cited factor on the list of categories, and was obviously a redressing factor for some respondents who had given negative feedback on school or family experience. It allowed interest to be rekindled and confidence to be increased:

'My school attitude changed completely when I started to travel...'

'Local town twinned with French town and our family became firm friends with French family.'

It was also a reinforcing positive factor for others who had a *positive* school experience, for example:

'I had several foreign 'penpals' whilst at school and wanted to correspond in their language as well as in English.'

It is clear from the weightings that this category was viewed as overwhelmingly positive for the majority of the respondent group, and can be closely linked to the 'reasons for study' responses in the next section.

Other

Of the fifteen who cited this category twelve offered the 'other' factor in a positive light. Factors stated ranged across OU self-help groups, literature in its original language, personal challenge of varying sorts, to employment/employer's attitude.

One respondent offered a more ideological reason 'If we want global co-existence we need to accord greater respect to the learning of other languages.'

REASONS FOR LANGUAGE STUDY

In this section, students were asked to indicate their current reasons for learning a language, in order to assess what motivational factors redress or enhance the effect of legacies. Many studies make a difference between 'instrumental' and 'integrative' reasons for learning a language, as originally coined by Gardner and Lambert.¹⁸ They suggested that those who identify positively with foreign peoples and their culture learn the language because of a pattern of motivation termed 'integrative orientation'. Those who learn languages because of practical advantages which accrue, sometimes linked to jobs or professions or a task in hand, are deemed to have 'instrumental orientation'. The latter are considered to be less effective language learners in that the learning is not as rooted in their personality but subject to external pressures. Dulay, Burt and Krashen¹⁹ add a third category: 'social group identification', which goes beyond the bounds of 'integrative orientation' in that it presupposes a desire on the part of the learner to become a member of the new group in which the language is spoken. With these in mind, therefore, four categories were offered which respondents could tick and enlarge on as necessary. The pattern of responses to these categories is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Reasons for language study

Reason for Study	Number citing
Employment	23
Travel to the area/country where the language is spoken	33
Contact with people who speak the language	30
Other	21

Employment

Twenty-three, over half of the respondent group, were studying languages with employment reasons as a key motivational factor. Twelve who gave comments had a directly instrumental reason, such as a teaching exchange to Germany, being financed by an employer for job purposes, widening the number of languages for teaching, and overseas business trips. Eight were working with a quasi-instrumental orientation of languages being ‘advantageous’:

‘Hope it will improve my chances of work in future employment.’

‘Could be an asset should I return to work in France.’

‘I am currently at home with young children and thought a language would help when returning to work’

‘having another language may increase future prospects.’

‘see language skills as a definite employment advantage.’

Two who offered comments gave reasons which, although linked to employment, tended more towards the ‘integrative’ than the ‘instrumental’:

‘English is compulsory in my multinational employer but it strengthens relationships to speak in your foreign colleagues’ tongue’

‘I find it useful when French guests arrive at my home (small private guest house)’

One respondent who cited this category, displayed motivation which crossed the boundaries between ‘instrumental orientation’ and ‘social group identification’:

‘Working in a Gaelic nursery, I have to develop my fluency and accent.’

Although in a work situation, this respondent is operating within a setting where cultural and social coherence is created based on the use of a common language.

In general, findings here confirmed that practical issues make language learning a more attractive proposition to English speakers.

Travel to the area/country where the language is spoken

Over three-quarters of the group, (33 respondents) cited this category. Comments revealed that travel reasons, either future plans or past visits (mainly recreational but occasionally work-related), played a large part in language learning motivation. These were closely related to a desire to communicate better, often overlapping with the ‘contact with people who speak the language’ reason for study. In this respect the greatest number of respondents seemed to be working within Dulay and Burt’s ‘integrative orientation’ framework:

‘While I was studying Auftakt²⁰ last year, my husband was encouraged to take

me to a German Christmas market for my birthday. It was wonderful to talk to the people in German – they were so much more responsive.’

For some respondents in this category the overlap with instrumental orientation was also to be found, in that their travel was work-related. Even within the area of leisure and pleasure ‘instrumental orientation’ was apparent: ‘I want to develop an outstanding cellar of French wine and this is easier if I can speak to *vignerons*.’²¹

Contact with Speakers of other languages

Thirty respondents cited this as a reason for current study, with 21 offering written comments. These reflected a wish to keep in touch with speakers of other languages either abroad or at home. The origin of the contact ranged through marriage, family connections, acquaintances gained while travelling, to employment contacts. Others expressed a desire to be able to speak to a country’s inhabitants when travelling abroad generally. Even those contacts which were work-related still showed ‘integrative orientation’ in that the contact was to enhance social rather than professional activity. Only one respondent displayed orientation approaching ‘social group identification’:

‘wife/children/in-laws/local French community in Moray.’

Other

These covered a broad range. Five respondents who offered comments cited cultural reasons, including access to literature and media. Others cited varying forms of personal enjoyment, challenge or ambition, including ‘the thrill of speaking to others round the world’. Others indicated a liking for learning other languages, while one had a practical issue to confront:

‘Being away from home four nights a week, I need to do something constructive.’

Three offered insights into a more ideological standpoint:

‘I have inculcated into my four sons the importance of languages. I do not think that school has given as much help as it could.’

‘Want to encourage my children to be open to other languages.’

‘becoming more European. Also I live in a Gaelic-speaking area of Scotland.’

Although practical reasons for language learning figured heavily, an open-mindedness to living in a multilingual society is the concern of some of our respondents.

DISCUSSION

First, with regard to legacies, it is clear that the educational one is potent. In Edward’s view, ‘education for the elite has always included a training in languages which evolved from a potent combination of necessity, snobbery and social boundary marking.’²² Without going so far as to suggest that the OU language student cohort in Scotland are part of an elite group, they do constitute an above-average academic group in schooling terms. The school experience in languages has confirmed respondents’ suitability and success in the language learning arena, thereby creating and maintaining their self-confidence levels. Their interest is also in accruing knowledge of several languages as well as building in-depth acquaintance of one. They will develop their language portfolio with any provider who offers the language option they require, rather than studying exclusively with the OU.

The legacy of the school experience can, however, also reinforce negative views

about the mother tongue language, the result of which is the informal learning of standard English. The outcome of this process may be two-fold. It may allow the development of an understanding of the broader language continuum, with language learning strategies informally and even subconsciously put in place. As Clark has suggested²³, this might also make the formal learning of another language easier, provided other factors such as academic support and understanding are also in place. On the other hand, it may create a feeling of *social* inferiority, for, as Trudgill says:

‘To suggest to children that their language, and that of those with whom they identify, is inferior in some way to imply that *they* are inferior. This, in turn, is likely to lead either to alienation from the school and school values, or to a rejection of the group to which they belong. It is also *socially* wrong in that it may appear to imply that particular social groups are less valuable than others.’²⁴

This can also lead to inferiority regarding academic study generally and language study in particular, which will detract from self-confidence levels, as undoubtedly happened in the past to speakers of Scots and Gaelic, who suffered under a linguistic yoke which was literal as well as metaphorical.²⁵ It is understandable that in the past many, as a result, rejected their mother tongue and culture and doubted their capacity to manipulate language. Scots and Gaelic speakers are perhaps in the minority and absent respectively in our survey for this reason, and, as a group, less likely to expose themselves to language study. Bonny Pierce has suggested that social identity and relations of power are inextricably linked to how the language learner integrates within any particular language learning context at any moment, and that this, and not linguistic ability *per se*, is what determines successful or unsuccessful communication:

‘many have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual...’

It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self, and...that a person gains access to – or is denied access to – powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak.’²⁶

If we accept Trudgill’s and Pierce’s points, then we must contend that, for some Scots, lack of self-confidence in language learning may be based on social rather than linguistic premises which have become confused with each other and lead to self-fulfilling prophecies not grounded in fact. In this respect, Scots may converge more with Pierce’s research groups of immigrant language learners in anglophone Canada, for example. This theory would have to be tested quantitatively, given that the sample does not appear to contain a substantial number of Scots or Gaelic speakers.

Cultural, political and social legacies are important in other ways. Although the *absence* of real cultural links was not a deterrent to language learning within the school context, the *presence* of such links does seem to constitute the main motivation for nearly all our respondents in taking up language study as adults. They are also a strong factor in overcoming any negative experience of language learning gained at school. Contacts with speakers of the target language, visits to the area/country where the language is spoken, and the desire to engage with foreign media or literature therefore become the main factors in their adult language learning, both for integrative and instrumental reasons. Again this is perhaps hardly a surprising discovery, since we know that the contextualisation of language study and its practical

value constitute major factors in motivation. However, we might also contend that, socially and economically, it is the very nature of our respondent group's lifestyle which facilitates travel abroad and contact with speakers of other languages.

Overall we might conclude that this group of Scots OU language students does not in fact differ greatly from any group of UK language learners in general, and are not marked out as particularly 'Scottish'. This lack of marked difference in itself begs the question of 'inclusion' or 'exclusion', one which will be examined in further quantitative research. Two key questions are at stake. First, have specific cultural, political and social legacies linked to native language perpetrated in a widespread way a lack of self-confidence amongst Scots with regard to language learning? Secondly, have geographic and socio-economic realities prevented travel and contact with speakers of other languages, which can bring practical meaning to language learning, overturn preconceived notions and reverse previous bad experiences?

David Crystal, talking recently about the demise of minority languages, has linked linguistic diversity to the issue of survival itself:

'Diversity occupies a central place in evolutionary theory because it enables a species to survive in different environments. Increasing uniformity holds dangers for the long-term survival of a species. The strongest ecosystems are those which are the most diverse. The need to maintain linguistic diversity stands on the shoulders of such arguments. If the development of multiple cultures is a prerequisite for successful human development, then the preservation of linguistic diversity is essential, because cultures are chiefly transmitted through spoken and written languages.'²⁷

If we agree that, in the global community, the plight of the monolingual mortal is becoming all the more evident, then it is undoubtedly time to make language learning more inclusive a domain, and a more accessible and relevant one to all categories of society. Political power models are undoubtedly beginning to shift, and a linguistic imperialism which assumes the domination of English as a world language must once again be questioned.

CONCLUSION

If Scots living abroad can become self-sufficient, if not bi-lingual, in the language of the countries in which they find themselves, then there is nothing to suggest that there is some predetermined genetic factor which makes us bad language learners when at home. If non-specialists in our neighbouring European countries such as Belgium and Spain can function daily in a variety of 4-5 foreign and indigenous tongues, what makes us think that we are unable to rise to the same challenge? In broad terms our linguistic heritage may not be dissimilar. We have the chance to tap into a polyglot mentality which has been present but dormant, ignored and discouraged for many years. Careful policy making, which reverses some of the educational and cultural legacies upon which we have touched, would be a stepping stone to raising confidence. Inevitably, greater language awareness would, in turn, lead to a healthier and more open cultural and social dialogue, which at the time of devolution seems crucial to ensure the healthy future of a small country.

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10. Clark, John, *Curriculum Renewal in School Foreign Language Learning*, OUP, Oxford, 1987, p.71
11. Claritas lifestyle profiling commissioned by the OU and presented in 1998. The average age of the students on OU French courses at his time was 45-54 and on German courses 35-44. The majority of language students were either professionals, of senior management status or retired.
12. Edwards, op. cit., p.1
13. Scotland, James, *History of Scottish Education*, Vol. 2, Constable, Edinburgh, 1969, p.26
14. Trudgill, Peter, *Sociolinguistics*, Penguin, London, 1985, p.8
15. Ibid., p.174
16. Skehan, Peter, *Individual Differences in Second Language Learning*, Arnold, London. 1989, p.49
17. Respondent born between 1931-1940
18. Gardner, R.C. and Lambert, *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning*, Newbury House, Rowley, Massachussets, 1972
19. Dulay, Burt and Krashen, op. cit
20. OU German course Level One
21. Wine producers.
22. Edwards, op. cit., p.4
23. cf. p.5
24. Trudgill, op. cit. p184-185
25. In the early part of the century, those caught speaking Gaelic in the playground were made to wear a wooden 'yoke' round their neck for their 'misdemeanour'. The same was also true in Welsh schools.
26. Pierce, B., 'Social Identity, Investment and Language Learning' in *Tesol Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No.1, Spring 1995, pp 12 and 13
27. Crystal, D., 'Death Sentence', *Guardian*, G2, October 25, 1999

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