

LANGUAGE AND WHO WE ARE: SOME SCOTTISH STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the importance to students in Scottish Higher Education of the languages they speak and the factors shaping views of language. Family, peer group, education, and community are shown to be powerful factors in determining attitudes to one's own language(s). Of particular impact upon the status of indigenous languages are socio-political pressures and, notably, the cultural and educational legacies which continue to prevail when thinking about language. Changing contexts play a part in modifying some individuals' attitudes to their own language(s). The paper illustrates this with findings from a survey, which shows that monolinguals may have a divergent view on language from bilinguals. The conclusion notes that languages in Scotland continue to be placed in a rather awkward relationship to a potential multilingual ethos. In a newly devolved political context, a resurgence in thinking about the role of language in Scottish society is a priority.

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this study arose from an earlier survey assessing the impact of educational and cultural legacies on attitudes to language and language learning amongst those raised and educated in Scotland (Nicolson, 2000). Although the questionnaire used in that survey did not focus specifically on identity, comments from respondents demonstrated that, for many, language played a major part in their perception of their identity. This was particularly the case where heritage and community languages and dialectal forms were concerned.

Since devolution, there has undoubtedly been a resurgence in thinking about Scots and their identity. Various surveys have attempted to establish whether or not those from Scotland attach themselves to Britishness or Scottishness (Scottish Parliamentary Election Survey, 1999; Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2000). The subject of identity has also been raised in studies of the new politics in Scotland (Brown, McCrone, Paterson, 1998; McCrone, 1999). Investigations about identity in a changing Europe are part of on-going debates, especially since the latter part of the twentieth century (Macdonald, 1993; Nelson, *et al.* (ed), 1992).

Language has also been part of that European debate (Gubbins and Holt, 2002; Fishman, 2001; Hickey and Williams (ed), 1996). Gubbins and Holt suggest that increase in interest in language is a result of a 'weakening of other traditional ties, such as religion and kinship, which have helped place the individual in society, and this has increased the importance of other markers such as language, region and nation' (Gubbins and Holt, 2002, p.6). Yet language has not figured prominently in the Scottish debate. Scotland has been reluctant to recognise, let alone promote, its multilingual ethos. Scotland's governance, (both before and after devolution), has not chosen language as a key factor in establishing a clear picture of its population through, for example, census questions. The 2001 census did continue with the usual Gaelic question (whether respondents can discretely read, write speak, understand any Gaelic) but it did not introduce new questions to discover the true number of mother tongue Gaelic speakers or, indeed, to discover the mother tongue status of *all* inhabitants of the country. Scotland has not, as Lo Bianco (2001) says, had a coherent and explicit national language and literacy policy in place, while, as MacPherson (Scottish

Executive, 1999) points out, language planning has not been taken in hand to make the future of indigenous minority languages more secure. It seems that Scots find it difficult to shake off the cultural and linguistic domination of English, the 'big' language (Edwards, 1994), which has submerged and subverted linguistic debate and awareness. This is beginning to change, however, with proposals for an Institute for Languages in Scotland and a corpus of work on indigenous languages and identity emerging (MaCaluim, 2002; McLeod, 2001; MacDonald, 1999).

SURVEY BACKGROUND

A questionnaire, designed in consultation with the Institute for Educational Technology at the Open University, was chosen as the best method of assessing views for this first study on understandings about language and identity across a number of geographically dispersed groups of Higher Education (HE) students. The questionnaire aimed for a mix of closed and open-ended questions with additional comments invited in all sections to better elucidate individual cases. Results are therefore a mix of statistical information gained via Excel calculations and a discussion of qualitative comments. The survey addressed four broad questions:

- What place does language assume in respondents' views of their identity profile?
- What factors have impacted upon the place they assign language and how has this changed or not with time?
- How were languages other than English regarded in the home/school/peer group and community for all respondents when growing up?
- In the home, what use was made of and what status was held by languages other than English in the experience of bilinguals/multilinguals? How did this affect their attitude to these languages and has it changed or not?

The concept of identity is debated within a number of academic disciplines, particularly the social sciences and humanities. In framing questions, we accepted current sociological thinking that identity is not essential, that it can shift over time, that it is responsive to outside factors and that plural identities may be at work (Hall, 1996).

One hundred and eighty questionnaires were despatched to four HE groups in Scotland, the first three groups receiving theirs via a teaching intermediary, the fourth group directly by post. They included:

- undergraduate language students at Stirling University (15 returns out of a possible 30)
- undergraduate students at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic college on Skye (14 returns out of a possible 30)
- postgraduate teacher trainees of modern languages or English at the University of Edinburgh, Moray House campus (22 returns out of a possible 30)
- OU students studying subjects other than language(s) (35 returns out of a possible 90).

The first three groups were targeted for their differing interest in languages, undergraduate foreign languages, indigenous Celtic languages and postgraduate vocational language study. The assumption was made that this would make them more responsive to questions. The OU non-language group was chosen as a control group. The response rate was lowest from this group (38.88%), perhaps because

this was a non-language group and/or because, for this group, questionnaires were received directly by post and not distributed by and returned to a teaching intermediary. Respondents' ages spanned from the late teens to the 60–69 bracket, with 74% between 20 and 49. The overall gender split was 71% female to 28% male (1% not known) although, notably, the Sabhal Mor Ostaig (SMO) gender split was even at 50:50.

The language profile of the 86 respondents was as follows:

Table 1: Languages spoken from childhood

	English only	German only	English and Gaelic	Eng. Gaelic and Doric	Eng. and Scots
Total	67	1	5	1	6
English and Lallans	English Hebrew and Yiddish	Spanish and English	Spanish, Gaelic and French	Cantonese and English	German Polish, and English
1	1	1	1	1	1

These figures imply that 18 respondents were bi- or multilingual in their youth, yet only 12 respondents *declared* they had been brought up as bilingual, 8 of those being born or raised in Scotland. Four respondents with Scots, one with Lallans as mother tongue, and one giving Scots and English as joint mother tongue did not respond positively to being 'bilingual' despite *clearly* having also been brought up as English speakers. (Lallans is another word for Scots, often referring specifically to the variety of Scots spoken in the Scottish Lowlands as opposed to Doric which usually refers to the variety of Scots spoken in the North-East of Scotland.)

On the basis of our previous study, we should have anticipated that the word 'bilingual' might be problematic for speakers of Scots. The term may be one they cannot relate to or they may be reluctant to view Scots as a separate language, this being part of the ongoing debate about the place of Scots language in the language continuum (McLeod, 2001; Murdoch, 1995). In the SMO sample half declared they had been brought up bilingually, significantly higher than for the other institutions. Four respondents overall indicated they were trilingual. From comments it was clear that, in addition, some respondents had experienced a multilingual environment while growing up but were not themselves actively bilingual.

WHAT PLACE DOES LANGUAGE ASSUME IN RESPONDENTS' VIEWS OF THEIR IDENTITY PROFILE?

Respondents were asked to rate ten identity components, including language, in the order 1–10, 1 being highest, 10 lowest. Average rankings were calculated per institution and per category as follows:

Table 2: Identity components ranking

	Nation-ality	Family	Comm-unity	Mother tongue	2nd lang	Educ-ation	Cultural backg.	Gender	Reli-gion	Social class
SMO Rank	5	2	3	4	8	6	1	7	9	10
Moray Rank	3	1	7	5	10	2	4	5	9	8
OU Rank	4	1	5	7	10	2	3	6	9	8
Stirling Rank	4	1	6	5	7	2	3	8	10	9

1 indicates highest rank, 10 indicates lowest.

It is interesting that, overall, mother tongue occupies a middle position, with SMO rating it most highly (4th). Second language occupies a relatively low position with Stirling University (SU) respondents rating it most highly (7th), although for most of the latter group this was a learned rather than native language. Although the Moray House (MH) cohort comprised postgraduate language students, their second language rating (10th) is as low as the non-language group. This defied expectation, since we had predicted that those studying a language would give it greater importance. This rating was lower than that of the OU non-language group which gave it 8th overall. Perhaps our prediction does not hold for all students of language or perhaps vocational training has diminished the importance of language(s) for these students, their focus now being on skills for teaching rather than on language skills per se. However, three respondents from the overall cohort, who were *not* bi-lingual by upbringing, rated their learned second language more highly than mother tongue, an issue which we will duly re-visit.

We find a difference between the top four ratings from MH, SU and OU respondents—family, education, cultural background and nationality—with those from SMO which are cultural background, family, community and mother tongue. ‘Culture’ and ‘community’ are notoriously difficult to define, but we can speculate that SMO’s ratings may be bound up in the link between language and culture. This link is seen to arise in minority language contexts as noted by Fishman (2000). May (2000) has commented on this as follows: ‘the traditionally associated language reflects and conveys its culture more felicitously and succinctly than other languages, *while that language-in-culture link remains generally intact.*’ (May, 2000, p.374).

This link may also account for comments reflecting difference in language usage. For example it became clear that in the Gaelic-English and Scots-English bilinguals’ experience, the heritage language was used more for practical purposes, presumably because its lexis best matched the environment in which it had traditionally operated. As one respondent wrote: ‘Gaelic was used on the croft doing that kind of work, to describe what was around us. I still only know the names of flowers, birds, shells

in Gaelic.’ Another respondent preferred to use Scots because it ‘was more natural and homely. There are many things you just can’t say in English.’ The language-in-culture link also explains comments related to generational difference: ‘[The] older generation understands Gaelic better than English.’ [respondent aged 20–30]. ‘People my parents’ age and older felt more comfortable speaking Gaelic within practical experiences. However, people my own age (25) tended just to use English.’ This reflects a diminution of specific ways of life such as crofting, and of the language associated with it, and results in what May terms the ‘*triumph* of universalism with respect to language’ (May, 2000, p.374). However, the Gaelic revival, including the rise in Gaelic medium education and broadcasting over the last twenty years, has created a new form of language linked to an increasingly global culture. In twenty to thirty years time responses to these questions might be very different again. We had expected religion to figure in aspects of language difference, since the Church has been key in keeping formal aspects of the language alive (Nicolson and Donnachie, 2003, pp. 28-29; MacInnes, 1982, pp.222-42; MacInnes, 1981, pp.14–17). However, none of our respondents mentioned this link, which may suggest a diminution in the place of religion in previously strongly religious communities.

Of the other multilingual respondents, only the Yiddish/Hebrew speaker rated community and cultural background as highly (1st and 2nd respectively) as those from a Gaelic background. However, a greater number of Yiddish-speaking respondents would be needed to draw parallels. Community as a factor in identity is accorded a much lower placing from the other groups, the majority of whom are English monolinguals.

A further difference emerged between SMO respondents and those in the other three groups with regard to education. For SU, MH and OU students, education occupied a clear second place. This is not surprising given that education ‘has been and is vital to the sense of Scottishness’ (McCrone in Bryce and Humes 1999, p.235). SMO students’ overall ranking of education was a much lower sixth place, despite the fact that just under half of SMO students later indicated that Higher Education/Further Education had been a major factor in changing their own view of their identity profile. This suggests two things: firstly that the low ordering for SMO refers mainly to *school* education. This may not necessarily shape the individual’s profile to the same degree for those who come from a minority language culture. This is especially the case if they have received their education in the dominant rather than minority mother tongue language. This is likely to be true for the majority of the age group in our sample. For these students, school education may have, in fact, caused alienation from their own culture and language resulting in regret or anger. This is supported by the heart-felt comments made by some of the respondents.

However, until more research is undertaken on the experience in Gaelic-medium education of the last twenty years we have little substantive evidence for comparison between those from earlier generations and those educated in the current Gaelic-medium context. MacNeil and Stradling’s research (2000), targetted at secondary school pupils currently or previously in Gaelic-medium education, tends to suggest that school students find the present school ethos supportive and encouraging of the use of Gaelic. This is a clear sea change from the late 19th and large parts of the 20th centuries in Scottish education (Nicolson and MacIver, 2003) where Gaelic was often discouraged, ignored or at worst stigmatised, with pupils, on occasion, punished for speaking it at school.

Secondly, the indication that Higher Education/Further Education has had an impact may relate to the fact that Sabhal Mor Ostaig exists for the promotion of the Gaelic language and culture, thus a change is inevitable in student perceptions either since proactively choosing to study there or since arrival at SMO.

When we disaggregate bi- and multilingual respondents’ ratings for mother

tongue and second language the results appear as follows:

Table 3: Ratings for Language

	Mother Tongue rank	2nd Lang rank
Those with more than one language (18 respondents)	3.9	6.7
Overall Totals (86 respondents)	5.3	8.8

1 is highest, 10 lowest.

We see that respondents with more than one language rated both second language and mother tongue more highly than the average. Five out of the six Gaelic bilinguals, whether it was their mother tongue or second language, rated Gaelic as a more important factor. On the other hand one Cantonese- and one Scots- speaking respondent rated the second language, English, more highly, which raises questions about the continuing utility of English and its higher place in the socio-economic and socio-political pecking order of languages.

When given the opportunity to cite other factors, respondents chose, for example, occupation, kin, marriage, children and non-vocational interests. Nine, (of whom four from a bilingual background) offered factors overtly or covertly to language or made language-related comments. One commented on accent and the artificial hierarchies which have operated, making some accents more acceptable socially and professionally than others. Another comment highlighted the rich mix of cultural and linguistic backgrounds present, but often unnoticed in Scotland, and the impact this has on identity:

‘Although born and bred in Scotland... I cannot deny my Irish blood from my father’s mother and see this as part of my identity. I was raised speaking... ‘Lowland Scots’ but I do not look on myself as Lowland as I and all my family are from the highlands of Perthshire and had Gaelic within living memory. The fact that I come on my Mother’s side from travelling people is also a big part of my identity. Although the same race as the settled Highlanders, the travellers have their own slightly different history and culture, experiences and languages and these are the factors that mould people’s identity.’

Another response reflects how parental culture remains an issue for many, despite little parental attempt to promote it:

‘My parents were Irish. I was born and brought up in London, and my parents did not attempt to foster an Irish identity. I have lived in Scotland for 34 years.’

Scottish and Irish Gaelic families living in urban environments have invariably faced this dilemma. Many have adopted the local culture for their offspring: this reflects both a proactive desire for total integration for the new generation and also natural assimilation which frequently takes place for pragmatic reasons, usually linked to education and even economic survival. This can lead first to a demotion of the heritage language followed by a later mythologisation of it (Gubbins, 2002), particularly when, by the second generation, the search for roots begins.

Comments in this section highlighted a view which we had expected to be more prevalent in our sample of those studying language(s): ‘As I studied French and German at university, these second languages play an important role in defining my sense of identity.’ Yet this was not a universal understanding for those who had studied a second language. This was one of only a few similar comments.

Another respondent pointed out the link between language and nation in the *dominant* language context: ‘When mother tongue is English, it is hard to separate this from nationality and culture.’ This link was not a prevalent one in our survey.

WHAT FACTORS HAVE IMPACTED ON THE PLACE THEY ASSIGN TO LANGUAGE, AND HAS THIS CHANGED OR NOT WITH TIME?

Respondents were asked if their rating of the components had changed with watersheds in time. They could cite more than one watershed and were also invited to add their own.

Table 4: Has the order of importance changed?

Those answering Yes out of a total of 86 respondents	Since School	Since FE/HE course	Since you began work	Since the estab. of the Scottish Parliament	For any other reason
Totals	68	45	37	9	27

The advent of the Scottish Parliament has, as yet, had little effect on respondents’ views. We had anticipated that, for some, revised views of their own identity, and of the factors which constitute it, might have emerged with the new political context. This did not appear to be the case in this survey. The most marked change identified on the timeline by respondents has occurred since school. There is less change since Higher or Further Education and even less since taking up work: for many one’s view of ‘who one is’ seems to become reasonably fixed in the post-school years. Of the other watersheds offered by respondents themselves, four were language-related, including for one a change since learning Gaelic and for another a change since becoming a fluent French speaker. For another, geographical movement brought greater linguistic awareness: ‘Going to study in Fort William and finding to my surprise that the people further North didn’t speak broader or more ‘teuchy’ as I expected, but they spoke English, and that I had spoken Scots all my life.’ This demonstrates a perception of language difference linked to Scottish north/south divisions, which has only been crossed by experience, and is indicative of the continued linguistic and cultural fragmentation of a seemingly small country.

A further six offered further comments linked to language, including:

‘Since turning 30... I felt the need to break from peer groups and work hard at re-identifying myself, [including learning] a second language.’

‘I have travelled a great deal..., and through meeting people from foreign cultures, who speak foreign languages, you realise/learn a lot more about your own country and identity.’

This illustrates how a new language experience can be a major component in transforming both one’s view of oneself and of the world.

Although these respondents mentioned language in the invited comments, some had placed it as low as 7 and 8 for mother tongue and 9 for second language in their original ordering of the identity factors. It is difficult to assess whether they would have made language the focus of their comments if they had not known the questionnaire's rationale.

HOW WERE LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH REGARDED WHEN THE RESPONDENTS WERE GROWING UP?

All respondents were asked this question in respect of home, school, peer group and community. Many monolinguals did not answer, perhaps because they had no experience of a multilingual setting or were unaware of its existence in their locality.

Most who responded said that they were 'perfectly acceptable for use at home and elsewhere' or 'a source of pride and cultural enrichment'. However, for one respondent from a Gaelic-speaking community, the comment was added that, in the home, 'this was just theoretical as only English was spoken as only my mother had Gaelic'. This demonstrates the often complex and symbolic nature of the language in minority cultures, where it becomes an emblem of identity despite not being spoken for pragmatic reasons, or perhaps not even known as a language by those living in that culture.

With regard to school, the percentage dropped, with just over half indicating acceptability. Comments elucidated aspects of unacceptability as follows:

'...most pupils had Gaelic and most teachers also spoke it but it tended only to be spoken as a language subject rather than a means of communication.'

'OK to be spoken to teacher, but me and my siblings were 'picked on' for speaking Gaelic to each other in school.' (Gaelic L1 speaker, aged 20–29)

As with accent, we observe signs of an artificially constructed language hierarchy at work, well known historically in minority language cultures, and in the Scottish context (Cross, 2003; Grant, 2000; Baker, 1996). Cross has demonstrated that in some schools there is continued tension between the permitted formal teaching of Scots songs and poems, yet the intolerance of Scots usage in teacher-pupil exchanges. Cross' recent classroom observations indicate that some teachers continue to view use of the Scots language as an attempt to defy authority (Cross, 2003, p.18). This links to a comment in our own survey:

'Scots spoken by everyone although told by teachers that you weren't speaking properly, boys especially realised speaking Scots annoyed teachers and thus spoke it all the time from primary through to secondary school.'

This highlights the issue of gender: boys can tend to use language, in this case indigenous language, as a means of promoting troublesome behaviour. We would suggest on the other hand that the female bias towards language is a positive one. This is reflected in the gender proportion in our own survey where more females than males study languages. This is, in its turn, reflective of a more widespread pattern in HE language study in general.

Further comments linked to foreign or community languages highlighted interesting standpoints. First of all language as a sign of precocity and an implicit threat:

'I was forbidden to speak Spanish at boarding school (where I went at 2) and it was my only means of communication) through various other boarding schools as it was considered 'showing off!' (English MT, Spanish L1, English L2)

Secondly, language as on the periphery and a sign of otherness:

‘[Languages] Of no great importance since all pupils had English as first language although a minority did speak Hindi amongst themselves.’

‘I was aware that children were taught Hebrew in school. Secondary school was made up of many cultural groups.’

Thirdly, languages and the people who speak them are seen as exotic:

‘[Languages] Looked upon as something strange and exotic! School was between 1940 to 1950. Foreigners and ‘people of colour’ were very scarce on the ground in Glasgow then. At senior secondary school we had two Sikh boys whose fathers were part of a Sikh detachment of the army. They spoke their own language, and English very fluently. On the whole they were regarded as good guys.’

It is interesting that the value judgement has been added as a final sentence to this comment. These views connect with comments by Phipps that: “‘speaking foreign’ is a complex matter of difference and of exoticism – of fear and blockage... of desire and of capital... ability to speak another language mesmerises and produces fear, anger, confusion, envy...’ (Phipps, 2000, p.20).

When responding to questions relating to peer group status, the number rating other languages as ‘perfectly acceptable for use within and outside the group’ or ‘a source of pride and cultural enrichment’ dropped to under half. Comments were as follows:

‘[Gaelic] not spoken as you stood out like a sore thumb if you did, even though most people could understand it. You didn’t want to come across as a goody-two-shoes and it was seriously uncool.’ (Respondent aged in his 20s).

‘[Gaelic] never spoken with any of my peers, bar people who were actually from my township’.

‘Only spoken in class and regarded as ‘uncool’ outside class’. (Non-bilingual, talking of learned languages)

Again the artificial hierarchy, linked to social factors emerges here. However, with the Gaelic revival, this has been turned on its head in many contexts, it now being more fashionable to speak Gaelic than English. We find similar comments with regard to Polish:

‘My father spoke Polish to friends outside the home, but didn’t speak it in the home.’

This is an interesting comment on the Polish community in Scotland and one that we might link, from personal knowledge, to other groups, such as Ukrainians. Despite a strong observance in clubs and societies of the culture and language of origin, the children’s main language is that of the adopted setting. The linguistic link to the parental language may therefore be a passive or stylised one, for example, an understanding of conversations, or knowledge of set pieces such as songs and poems.

IN THE HOME, WHAT USE WAS MADE OF AND WHAT STATUS WAS HELD BY LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH IN THE EXPERIENCE OF BILINGUALS/MULTILINGUALS, HOW DID THIS AFFECT THEIR ATTITUDE TO LANGUAGES AT THE TIME AND HAS IT CHANGED OR NOT?

More interesting comments emerged about why one language was used most for practical purposes:

‘Because it has been spoken in my family for at least two generations and is the language that you learn at your mother’s knee and the language that comes naturally.’ (Scots mother tongue/English L2, referring to Scots language)

Not all bilingual respondents rated their mother tongue fluency level as ‘excellent’. Two with Gaelic as mother tongue and Language One rated their English fluency better than their Gaelic. If mother tongue is not the medium of education or is not taken as a discrete school subject then this is not surprising, since reading and writing skills in the language will be absent or, at best, basic. Similarly, as we have discussed, the mother tongue may operate in different contexts, thus lexis and phraseology will not have been developed for all contexts. This may also explain why not all bilinguals classed mother tongue as Language One, since their second language, English, prevails in a wider number of situations.

With regard to whether or not the way language was used in the home affected attitudes, the following responses emerged:

Table 5

L1s responding ‘yes’ elucidated as follows: ‘Made me appreciate my family

	Number saying Yes	Number saying No
Language One (L1)	5	8
Language Two (L2)	6	7
Language Three (L3)	3	2

background.’ (English/Gaelic/Doric-speaking family); ‘Always encouraged to speak good English ‘properly’; ‘[English] had to be spoken correctly – grammar and pronunciation important. Sounding ‘t’ and not dropping ‘h.’” The bilingual Cantonese/English speaker felt that her background had paved the way for ‘more of an interest in foreign languages’.

Of the larger percentage who said the way second language was used affected their attitude, many offered comments containing emotive or value judgement language (all italics here are mine): ‘I simply became aware of the notion of bilingualism and found it was a *privilege*’; ‘Never particularly liked English as talking ‘*posh*’ always seemed *fake* and sounded *teuchtery*, although *power* and *prestige* of English were noted’; ‘Gaelic was my parents’ first language and I *respected* that.’ ‘My father always spoke Gaelic to the family, but we would understand and answer in English. Now I speak and reply to him in Gaelic’; ‘Made me *proud* and *desirous* of speaking other languages.’

We see here a mix of attitudes which have co-existed in Scottish society: for some an in-built respect for their language other than English; for others a feeling that English is linguistically more valid and of a higher order. For the Hebrew speaker the relationship was also linked to metaphysical order: ‘(Hebrew) is somehow *special*, almost *magical*. [It is] the language of God.’

The same respondent whose third language (L3) was Yiddish had her attitude to that language directly influenced by her family:

‘Yiddish was viewed by my grandmother as somehow *dirty*, vulgar, and not to be used... fear I suppose...’

It would appear that the imposition of an artificial language hierarchy has again prevailed for non-linguistic reasons.

The extent to which respondents' attitudes had changed since their younger days emerged as follows:

Table 6: Would you say your attitude to languages has changed?

Those who Attitude change?	offered reasons for change in attitudes commented as follows: 'I'm					
	Lang 1	Lang 1	Lang 2	Lang 2	Lang 3	Lang 3
	Has not	Has	Has not	Has	Has not	Has
Totals	9	4	8	4	2	1

more aware of Gaelic's situation now, so I get annoyed when I don't see it spoken so much in the community' (Gaelic L1). 'Proud of Scots although [I'm] seen as a country bumpkin or half-wit by some people who must not realise I have perfect English as well' (Scots L1).

The L3 Yiddish speaker commented with implicit regret: 'Yiddish is part and parcel of the community way, (younger set), of carrying a unique identity. Wish I knew more: I would like to learn to speak, read and write it fluently.' Another English/Doric and Gaelic speaker expressed regret that English was the only language taught formally. This comment links to current debates in educational curricular policy which aims to reverse past neglect of indigenous tongues and their works of literature.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

For most English-speaking monolinguals in our survey, language occupies a mediocre or low place in the identity profile ratings. We assume this is because they do not reflect upon it in a conscious way or have no necessity in their living or working contexts to make it an emblem of who they are. It is interesting and worthy of further research that the study of language does not guarantee an increased rating for language although, for some, it can bring about a life-changing experience.

We have seen that it is difficult to know if those who gave language a low numerical placing, but nonetheless focussed on it in their comments, did so because this was a questionnaire about language. If this was the case, it indicates that awareness-raising in this domain does work. As we might expect, those from a multilingual background have a greater sensitivity to the place of language.

Such sensitivity becomes more acute when linked to a desire to recover past family, community or cultural legacies. Edwards (1985) has written about the difference 'between language in its ordinarily understood sense as a tool of communication, and language as an emblem of groupness, as a symbol, a rallying-point'. McDonald, in her study of a Gaelic community in Skye, also focuses on language as an emblem or symbol with regard to "heritage languages" which are 'seen to lie at the heart of a deep-seated identity from which individuals and people should not be estranged. Within this model, language use is conceptualised not so much as a pragmatic matter as an affective, symbolic and political one: the decline in 'a people's language' is seen as evidence of alienation and perhaps even repression. The loss of a heritage language is seen as synonymous with the loss of identity.' (MacDonald, 1997, p.219)

Some of our respondents have themselves come to this view in their late teens or as adults and language has assumed greater importance in their vision of who they are. This has led to dedicated study in that language linked to a greater pride

in personal and historical backgrounds, and some regret at not having nurtured the language earlier:

‘I wish I had taken more of an interest when I was younger.’ (Gaelic L2 speaker)

‘Now, after studying Gaelic through school, uni and now at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, I feel that it is part of who I am and where I come from and I feel proud to be able to speak it.’ (Gaelic MT/English L2)

Here we detect elements of Fishman’s assertion that the language and ethnicity link is generally experienced positively when: ‘...collective consciousness and mobilization have been attained: From that point on the linkage is often wrapped up in notions and assumptions of kinship, history, responsibility to one’s people and to its linguistically encoded heritage, and the aesthetics of the ‘beloved language’ ...as well as the eternity and the utter appropriateness of the language’s association with the collectivity’ (Fishman,1999, p.160). This view also helps to explain the following comment, which alludes to a certain linguistic responsibility within the community:

‘I’m more aware of Gaelic’s situation now so I get annoyed when I don’t see it spoken so much in the community.’ (Gaelic MT/English L2)

It also relates closely to Hudson’s view on how paramount linguistic evaluation is, when he writes that:

‘The most important question is how people evaluate the dialect or language that they speak themselves, because this is so closely linked to their self-evaluation. It seems obvious that a society functions best when all its members are proud to be what they are, so they should all value their own speech because they value the community to which they belong’. (Hudson, 1996, pp.209-210)

Comments from the Gaelic and Scots speakers, the L3 Yiddish speaker, those from Irish backgrounds and the respondent from a Polish background all demonstrate how varying degrees of linguistic self-esteem have determined the use and continuation of that language at various times and in different contexts: for example, Gaelic as ‘uncool’ or the embarrassment of one respondent’s mother at his father speaking Polish. The political element, however, is less in evidence in our survey, so here we would agree with Safran’s view that ‘...language may also be used to make a community aware of its culture and to instil a collective pride in it without encouraging political aspirations’ (Safran, 2001, p.82). This is also connected to the degree of ethno-linguistic vitality exercised, something for which Scots have not been renowned especially when compared to Catalan and Basque speakers (McLeod in Nicolson and Maciver, 2003, ch. 2).

A minority of respondents raise what might be regarded as political comment, albeit implicitly. The first two lay the blame regarding language issues clearly at the door of the school education system:

‘Identity was important at school, though history lessons were usually about Tudors and Stuarts. Not much was mentioned about the Highland clearances which interested me. Also why were we not taught to speak our native tongue?’ (Gaelic)

‘Schools in Ayrshire are anglicised. There is no provision for Gaelic and Scottish national identity. After a university education all my opinions and outlooks on life, society and national identity have changed. I now take an educated view, have high opinions and morals.’

The third clearly demonstrates that it is impossible to achieve a unitary identity across Scotland, since regional differences are too great, while suggesting that, in any case, identity is only the preoccupation of some:

‘National identity and pride differ from region to region. People from the south of Scotland are very much ‘part of Britain’ and find Gaelic backward and useless. Some people don’t care about national identity as long as they have a good, healthy materialistic lifestyle. National identity is really only important to people with a real interest in it and culture, language, history etc. Otherwise I think we would have had a revolution years ago, just like the Irish.’

This respondent has also confirmed that the adoption of the heritage language by those who had no contact with it when younger **can** represent a strong belief about what factors make up national identity, a politically-loaded concept in contemporary Scotland. MaCaluim, referring to Comunn na Gàidhlig’s Gaelic learners’ survey of 1992, echoes the respondent’s view, when he notes:

‘...most learners tend to visualise the significance of the language in national or Highland terms rather than in terms of any particular community... most (learners) are motivated partially or wholly by identity related reasons such as national identity...’ (MaCaluim, 2002)

The inclusion of language as a factor in national identity in Scotland is, of course, a relatively recent phenomenon, dating only from the latter half of the twentieth century. Before that, unlike other forms of minority national identity in Europe, language was neither as central to Scots identity nor as politicised. The letters pages of the Scottish broadsheets often testify to the heated nature of this debate, with an ongoing battle between factions of the Gaelic and Scots lobbies.

We have also noted that, for many bilinguals in our sample, English emerges as the language of the establishment. One Gaelic-speaking respondent wrote of the ‘*power and prestige* of English’. A Scots-speaking respondent noted that ‘Scots is seen as being bad English even by many educated people, who should know better.’ Bryson contends that no-one has ever said: ‘Yes, my language is backward and unexpressive, and could really do with some sharpening up. We tend to regard other people’s languages as we regard their cultures – with ill-hidden disdain’. (Bryson, 1991, p.7) Yet, in the Scottish context we find words such as ‘uncool’ attached to mother tongue, and the perception that a Scots speaker is viewed by his peers as ‘a country bumpkin or half-wit’ when he speaks Scots.

The role of education in reinforcing a negative evaluation of languages other than English emerges again, where those speaking Scots weren’t deemed to be ‘speaking properly’. Grant has talked of this as being ‘brainwashed into the idea that English is “more correct”’ (Grant, 2000, p.29). He also talks about the historically prevalent ‘deficit’ model of bilingualism, where another language was thought to disadvantage the child educationally. Johnstone, *et al*’s study (1999) on children in Gaelic-medium education has undermined that long-held belief, with the contention that children who become fluent in two languages early in life tend to perform no worse than others. In fact, it is interesting that in our sample, which focuses on those educated under a previous regime, when Gaelic-medium education was not the norm, the degree of change in attitudes to language is most marked *post-school*.

CONCLUSION

In Scotland we maintain a rather awkward relationship with language and languages, and will continue so to do if it is not accepted as a necessary element of who we are.

Although a strong eco-linguistic stance is not one we wish to adopt here, there is nonetheless merit in resisting uniformity in language which, of necessity, results in the death of minority tongues (Crystal, 2000). The ability to share another outlook on the world through other forms of thought, literature, and lexis is one which can only enhance tolerant relationships between different cultural groups and impact positively on the whole area of language learning. In a modern and devolved Scotland this should be a key objective, indeed, a priority.

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