

Scotland and Northern Ireland as Scots-speaking Communities

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When Dónall Ó Baoill and I devised the set of ten questions for the symposium prospectus, it was with Scottish Gaelic and Irish in mind. It became clear, however, that the same questions could be addressed to the present situation of Scots – in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and indeed the Republic of Ireland. Before looking at the questions in turn, let me begin by considering six factors which might lie behind any possible answers.

The Linguageness Issue

Academically-qualified descriptive linguists have shown that, as a language system, particularly at the syntactic level, where propositional meaning, speech-act and other pragmatic functions are encoded, Scots is bound up with English as a communicative system. In the most abstracted sense of the term, encompassing all sorts of variation and diversity, Scots is nothing other than English.¹ With no system of its own, Scots is without structural uniqueness and, in Kloss's terms, without *Abstand* from English – even allowing for the acknowledged subjectivity in Kloss's terminology.² In such arguments, morphological variation is simply regarded as Scottish exponents of the shared underlying English system of part-of-speech categories and classes, which in any case readily accommodates variation especially in England itself. To the already extensive and richly varied vocabulary of English, a Scottish dimension is added through multiple domain extension – that Scottish dimension being itself huge, as testified by the two historical dictionaries and their spin-offs,³ and of the highest indexical importance to Scottishness,⁴ despite its sometimes-perceived barrier to mutual comprehensibility and therefore role in claims to languageness status. Claims about languageness on the basis of syntax are dubious, perceiving variation among surface realisations as indexical of separate linguistic identity without regarding them as alternatives or variants of the same underlying system, or without seeing the wood of a shared system for the distinctive exponents of a few individual trees. Finally, phonological variation is also explainable as local exponents within an overall English system – after all, the Survey of English Dialects found every vowel possible in pronunciations of the word *stone*. For those linguists espousing a 'Scots-is-English' view, the arguments of Aitken's seminal 1980 paper have been definitive: Scots does not have a separate linguistic identity. As Falconer (2007) shows, Scots has not 'converged' with English, as I once claimed (Kirk 1997) but has become 'asymmetrically converged' or 'dialectalised' with English. Görlach (1998) talks of a vicious circle, with the loss of users cyclically begetting the loss of functions; Falconer presents the situation as a dynamic 'gyre of dialectalisation', with the intimate functions at the centre, the ones that survive. The language issue is, rightly, dialectalisation. Besides, in another location, despite efforts by Noah Webster and others, there is still no American language,

¹ See, for instance, Kirk 1986, 1987, 1998; Bergs, 2001, 2005; Miller 2004, and numerous histories of English.

² Kloss 1978. For discussion of Kloss, with regard to Scots, see also Falconer 2007, Millar 2005, 2006.

³ *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, *Scottish National Dictionary*, *Concise Scots Dictionary*, *Scots Thesaurus*, *A Dictionary of the Scots Language*, etc.

⁴ 'A knowledge of Scots is necessary for a knowledge of Scotland.' (*Statement of Principles*, reproduced in this volume on p. 216)

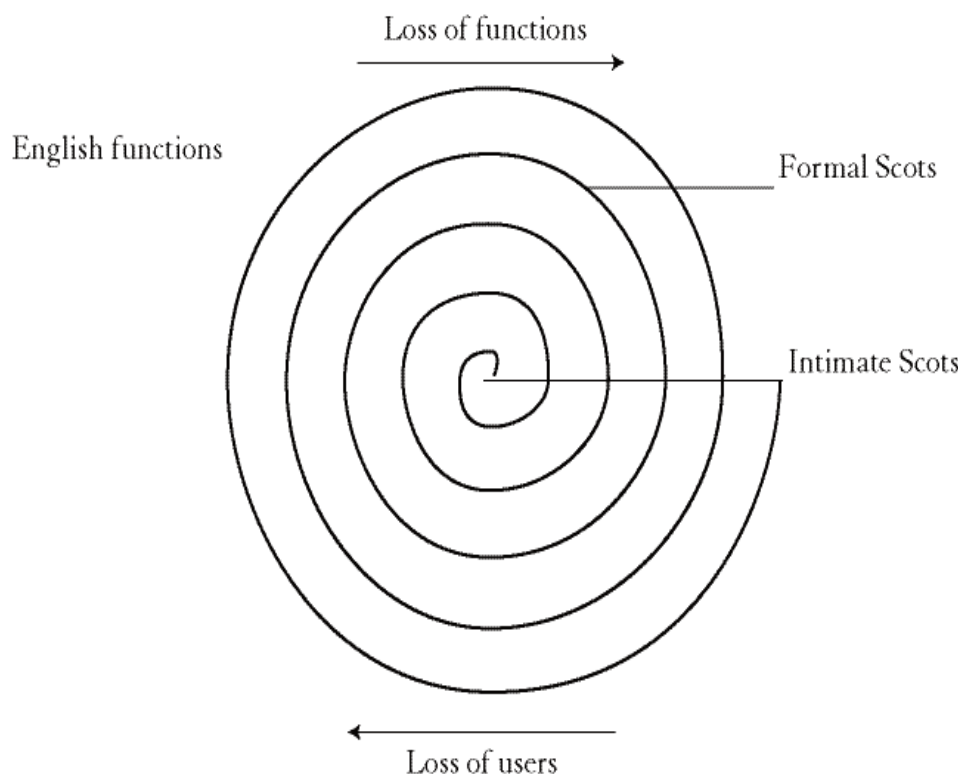


Figure 5: The Gyre of Dialectalisation⁵

American English, being another standard dialect of the language, just like Scottish English, with various regional dialects within each.

Against this, other linguists, usually ignoring syntax and pragmatics, have simply asserted that the accumulation and combination of exponents or realisations – especially at the lexico-phonological level (*hame* for *home*; *hoose* for *house*, etc.) and at the morphological level (*-it* for *-ed* participles, *the bairns cries oot*, etc.) – amount to a system of their own. Add its massive vocabulary and Scots, therefore, is nothing other than its own language.⁶ Because of those realisations, and their widespread prevalence, Falconer (2007) argues that Scots fulfils Kloss's *Mindestabstand* or criterion – also called 'borderline Abstand' (Millar 2006).⁷

The central language issue concerning Scots is without a doubt 'languageness' – for Scots to be a language, dialectal variation has to be promoted to the level of that pertaining between languages, not dissimilar to Dutch and Deutsch.⁸ If Scots meets Kloss's minimum criteria of *Mindestabstand*, it becomes qualified as a potential *Ausbau* language – or a language which is developable in terms of registers and function and domain. Examples of just such developments in the form of Civil Service Scots are provided by *Lallans* and more recently Corbett (2003) and Corbett and Douglas (2003).

In two articles by Jim Miller (2003, 2004), the same morphosyntactic material is

⁵ I am grateful to Gavin Falconer for permission to publish this figure and for comments on a draft of this paper.

⁶ There is an abundance of such views in the literature, including McClure (e.g. 1995, 2009), Purves (2002).

⁷ Falconer's (2007) suggestion that regional subvarieties of Scots such as Doric and Shetlandic are *Abstand* languages vis-à-vis Standard English need not concern us here.

⁸ Falconer (2007) also contends that North-eastern Scots is *more different* from Standard English than Dutch is from German, even today, while traditional Central Scots is about *as different* from Standard English as Dutch is from German, or the Scandinavian languages today.

presented with identical examples, which are described, in the one, as ‘Modern Scots’ and, in the other, as ‘Scottish English’. No doubt the choice reflects their place of publication: the Modern Scots article appears in the *Edinburgh Companion to the Scots Language*, the purpose of which is to assert and describe Scots as ‘a language continuum with Scottish Standard English’; the ‘Scottish English’ article occurs in a massive compendium of articles pertaining to English all over the world, entitled *A Handbook of Varieties of English: A Multimedia Reference Tool. Volume 2: Morphology and Syntax*,⁹ where each ‘variety of English’ is treated in terms of a common set of morphosyntactic features, and where the Englishness of each variety is vindicated.¹⁰ The variationist work throughout Britain and Ireland by Sali Tagliamonte and her collaborators¹¹ also shows the heteronomy of Scots with the rest of English in these islands and that variation amounts simply to different choices of realisation. There is insufficient *Abstand* with English. So at the core of any debate or tension around Scots is the inescapable descriptive issue around its languageness. *Scots simply ain’t a language!*

A further descriptive issue is, however, perfectly clear – if the languageness of Scots were granted, there are not two Scotsses: a Scotland Scots and an Ulster Scots. Ulster Scots is dialectalised Scots. Falconer (2007) provides an irrefutable deconstruction of the languageness of Ulster-Scots claim. As Falconer (in this volume) also shows, following the *Scottish National Dictionary* and Caroline Macafee (2001), Ulster Scots is a variant of Central Scots, better to be labelled as Hiberno-Central.¹²

The Apperceptual Issue

Other claims about the languageness of Scots are made on the basis of apperception. The apperceptual argument would contend that, in their minds, regardless of the descriptive facts, people *classify* Scots as a language, so that, for them, that is what Scots is or becomes. It is Humpty Dumpty’s argument: ‘a word means what I say it means’. Apperception is the usual basis for the languageness claim, particularly among activists.

In his anthology, *Scots Plays of the Seventies*, the late Bill Findlay makes it clear in the very title that these plays are plays ‘in Scots’. One of those plays is Roddy MacMillan’s *The Bevellers*, which was revised in the winter of 2006–7 winter by the Glasgow Citizens Theatre. After the performance on 6 February 2007, there occurred a discussion between the actors, the director and the audience, in which I participated. I asked whether the actors considered the language which they had just been uttering as Scots. Not one did! It was a Scottish cast, but for each and every one, the language of *The Bevellers* was ‘English’, although they were prepared to call it ‘Glaswegian’, i.e. ‘Glaswegian English’. Bound up with the language issue for some people is thus also the recognition whether Scots actually exists. In a post-devolution age, Scotland may be becoming culturally more and more Scottish, younger age groups increasingly inclined to think of themselves as only Scottish (and not Scottish and British or only British as their parents or grandparents may have done). At the same time, what Scottish people regard their language as seems not to be ‘Scots’, and if they don’t get as far as the label ‘Scots’, they are certainly not getting to the languageness classification. Unless

⁹ Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi 2004. Cf. also Kortmann, 2008; Szmrecsanyi and Kortmann 2009.

¹⁰ Incidentally, that volume has a fine chapter on Irish English where the common set of features are treated for both the North and South of Ireland by Markku Filppula.

¹¹ See, for instance, Tagliamonte, Smith and Lawrence. 2005a, 2005b.

¹² Because the identification of the present four main regional dialects of Scots by the SND is largely on the basis of contact, Ulster Scots merits reclassification as the fifth regional dialect – also on the basis of contact.

and until there is a question in the Census, asking people whether they speak ‘Scots’, we may not know how many people share the activist view.

The Literary Language Issue

The Bevellers raises the literary language issue. For some, Scots is an important and powerful functional literary register, expressing states of heart and mind which, for Scottish people, Scots alone can express. For Burns, his Kilmarnock edition presented ‘poems chiefly in the Scottish Dialect’. As a result of the inspiration from MacDiarmid’s poems in *Penny Wheep*, writers in Scots came to form the Scots Language Society where the main purpose was to encourage the writing of literature in Scots. At the society’s meetings, I have observed that MacDiarmid’s achievement is referred to as an example and inspiration in discussion after discussion.

On the other hand, Donald Dewar, a politician among few who could show that he had done his reading of Scottish literature, once remarked to the effect that ‘as we all know what Scots is, there’s no need to do anything for it’.¹³ Almost certainly, I suggest, Dewar considered Scots a literary language and that, therefore, for a literary language his (and presumably subsequent) Scottish Executive(s) felt that they did not need ‘to do anything’. Much present-day Scottish literary output about Scotland or with Scottish characters is in English. James Kelman, A.L. Kennedy, William McIlvanney, Andrew O’Hagan, Irvine Welsh, for instance, to name but a few, articulate the present-day Scottish condition to Scottish people and to the world, but it’s not through traditional literary Scots. Would they have had that success had they written in a ‘dense’, ‘thick’, literary Scots (McClure 1995) like *Scorn: My Inheritance* by William Graham?¹⁴

The Legislative Issue

As far as I’m aware, it was thanks to the lobbying by the Scots Language Society and prime movers such as David Purves and the late John Law – that led in the end to Scots being recognised as a language in the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Language*.¹⁶ The argument seemed to be that, as Scots was a literary language, and the society existed to promote it as such, it was *tout court* a language. In this context, Scots is better considered as a regional rather than minority language, for as a language it is of and for the majority. In 2006, the European Union came to recognise all languages as languages, whether *gross* or *klein*, whether national, majority, minority or regional. The Charter is an international convention and thus has status under international law. By ratifying it to bring it into force, the UK Government and its devolved institutions were committing themselves to courses of action with regard to the languages named, to producing reports on those action every three years, and to receiving feedback on those reports by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts. So the argument is made that because the Charter recognises Scots as a language, then that is what it is, and everyone should follow its example, as Macafee (2001) once urged. Politics precedes language, as it were. It is certainly this fact of inclusion in the Charter that, in Northern Ireland, Ulster-Scots is recognised by the authorities and talked up by the activists as a language. For some, no matter what the arguments of the linguistic

¹³ The remark occurred during a discussion on Scots at the ISAI Conference TCD, October 2000, a few days before his death.

¹⁴ William Graham, *Scorn: My Inheritance*. Glasgow: Scotsoun Publications. 1997.

¹⁵ Available from <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/cadreprincipal.htm>

case – or their merits – might be, the Charter has decided: Scots is a language, and Ulster-Scots, it would seem, another.

The Speech vs. Writing Issue

Literary language entails a further issue: how far is Scots a matter of speech or writing. No matter how realistic of actual speech literary writing might be (e.g. James Kelman, Tom Leonard; cf. Kirk 1997, 1999), writers tend to regard their work as ‘imaginative’ ... as artistic creations crafted out of language. In a recent dissertation on the Belfast dramatist Martin Lynch which I supervised, the candidate invoked numerous models in pragmatics to show how highly realistic of everyday speech Lynch’s play *The Interrogation of Ambrose Fogarty* is.¹⁶ Towards the end of her work, with her arm strengthened by the arguments she had mustered, the candidate interviewed Lynch. Of ‘speech realism’ he would hear none of it! His plays he regarded as ‘pure imagination’, as works ‘out of his head’. Any overlap with everyday speech was pure coincidence.

When Scots is conceived of as a spoken language, however, it is the rural working classes or the urban dwellers who come to mind, arousing mixed reactions. Rural speakers are admired for loyalty to their social origins, although that loyalty is breaking, as various traditional realisations are abandoned in favour of more English, as Jennifer Smith (2005) shows with regard to Buckie. And it was with regard to urban speakers that the notion of ‘Bad Scots’ arose, so labelled because, to the language, were being transferred associations with its speakers, social judgments masquerading as linguistic categorisation. Thus spoken Scots has tended to be associated with class judgments both favourable or otherwise, and also stigmatisation, or ‘the cringe factor’.

A general belief is confirmed¹⁷ that the middle classes in Scotland know more Scots – and more about Scots – than the working classes because it is the middle classes who read literature in Scots; and that it is from literature that the knowledge particularly of vocabulary as well as attitudes of positive approval towards ‘the guid Scots tongue’ are derived.

There is some convergence between the speech and writing arguments among a very small number of academics and activists, whereby non-literary, i.e. informational and transactional prose is coming to be written in Scots, and speeches made in Scots – albeit mostly speeches first scripted in Scots and then read aloud. Collectively, such Scots has been labelled ‘Civil Service Scots’ by John Corbett and Fiona Douglas (2003: 202), which gives a good overview and positive assessment of these developments. Also the examples by Ian Brown, Andy Eagle, Billy Kay and John Law in this volume, as well as numerous papers in previous Language and Politics proceedings volumes (e.g. Kirk and Ó Baoill 2000, 2001, 2003), and documets such as a *Statement of Principles* (see this volume p. 216).

The challenge thus rests with the expansion or Ausbau of the literary language to other domains not sounding too literary and yet at the same time not sounding too colloquial, vernacular or stigmatised, neither of which seems likely to win approval.

The Social Need Issue

Experiments in formal prose in Scots are extremely few. As Falconer (2007) shows,

¹⁶ The play was coincidentally revived by Tinderbox during the summer at the Grand Opera House, Belfast.

¹⁷ Karl-Inge Sandred, *Good or Bad Scots? Attitudes to Optional Lexical and Grammatical Usages in Edinburgh*. Studia Anglistica Uppsaliensia 48. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. 1983.

Scots is entirely revivable – Scots could legitimately reclaim its languageness again, ‘a once and future language’. Without experimentation, there can be no *Ausbau*, and the experimentation of ‘Civil Service Scots’ documented by Corbett and Douglas (2003) and the papers in the Language and Politics proceedings volumes are cases in point. But what holds back further experimentation almost certainly is the lack of will or desire, or the absence of a rationale or justification, on the greater part of both the population or Holyrood politicians, to take any action. Such, too, are the reactions to some of the striking experiments in Northern Ireland: Civil Service Ullans is not giving ordinary people their *braid Scotch* back again. There is a huge schism between ordinary speakers and revivalist activists because the aim was to increase *Abstand* rather than *Ausbau*. There’s even less comprehension and a lot more incredulity about experimentation in the Republic of Ireland.

So the social questions of ‘why bother?’, ‘for what use?’, bring us back to the central theme of the 2007 symposium. There appear to be two polar positions: If the twin premises of Scotsness and languageness are granted – that Scots exists as a language – then is the matter resolved? Has Scots arrived and needs no further pleading? Was Dewar right then: that there is nothing to be done? If the twin premises of Scotsness and languageness are not granted, then what is being accepted or denied? Does the commonality of the various dialects amount merely to a supra-regional dialect, a national tongue? If the national tongue is not a language, then is it ultimately English? Even the title of Millar (2007) categorises ‘Northern and Insular Scots’ among ‘Dialects of English’. And for dialects of English, whither then the provisions of the Charter? The fine-line surrounding languageness is the source of much debate and a cause of much tension. As Johnson observes: “the attribution of ‘languagehood’ is as much of a socio-political judgement as a linguistic one’ (207: 105).

Either way, as ‘language’ or ‘dialect’, Scotland can still be claimed as Scots-speaking. Or is Jim Miller’s implicit point that ‘Scots’ and ‘Scottish English’ are two names for the one and the same socio-political reality? Perhaps it is an implicit rather than explicit language:¹⁸ if anything is to be done, it’s more a question of awareness raising and attitude shift. Was there any need for Scots to be recognised by the European Charter? Is the Executive thereby justified in its hitherto stance effectively of ‘doing nothing’?¹⁹

If one accepts that Scotland isn’t Scots-speaking, then is the goal of all activism to make Scotland Scots-speaking and to provide for promotion and implementation? Or is Scots-writing the goal – ultimately nothing short of full-scale revival? Fully-fledged Civil Service Scots?

Or is the goal to do neither? Is the goal rather more about changing underlying attitudes and values? Is the goal to get people like the Citizens Scottish actors to accept minimally that Scots exists and that, in some way or another for Scottishness, it is a good thing? Is it about adopting the label ‘Scots’? Is it about encouragement ‘where useful’, ‘where there is demand’, as the Charter puts it? The papers on Scots on economic development in Kirk and Ó Baoill (2009) identify that what was exploiting Scots as a marketing tool was the commercial entrepreneurial world, without any legislation or government directive.

Perhaps, if left to market or consumer forces, less than full-scale revival is a worthy goal. If people find it beneficial to use Scots, or to refer to their way of speaking or

¹⁸ Other metaphors have been used for such borderline cases. Ó Riagáin (2003: 301) talks of ‘hidden’ and ‘eclipsed’ languages; Montgomery (1997) talks of Ulster-Scots as a ‘submerged’ language.

¹⁹ For further discussion of this point, see Kirk 2008.

writing as Scots, so be it. It might all come down to *laissez faire*, however *laissez faire* would not be justified in terms of the European Charter because it makes explicit reference actions rather than inactions.

Less than full-scale revival might amount to no more than symbolism – after all, Scotsmen have always used their knowledge of Scottish words and locutions to reinforce their Scottishness. *We're aa Jock Tamson's bairns*. In any Scottish speaker of English there are Scotticisms galore. Scottish people all switch and drift as circumstances require. The real difference is in written language – not just official prose, but public signage, newspapers, forms, packaging, menus, labels, and so on. Giftware from t-shirts, coffee mugs, coasters to mousemats etc. has come to display Scots words and sayings. (I have t-shirts with *braw* and *blether* and another with *It's a sair fecht* on it.) It strikes me that short texts with a symbolic value might well be the way forward, rather than texts with a functional or transactional value (such as instructions or minutes or the myriad of Civil Service communications). It's hard to justify transactional written Scots to secure co-operation or an intended communicative goal; but there's no end to symbolism, which is both easier to achieve and much harder to object to.

In speech, there's a fair deal of symbolism already in operation. Quite apart from distinct lexical items like *dreich* or *gollach*, or *scunner* or *tatties*, Scottish pronunciations of core vocabulary shared with English such as *hoose* or *hame*, *fae* or *tae*, *doon* or *oot* are shibboleths or markers of Scottishness, indexes to a shared Scottish culture with a set of references and values inexpressible through any other exponents or realisations, as you would find in the rest of the English speaking world. For many, it is simply those realisations which put the languageness into Scots. Yet for others, like my late father, who left school at 14 without much formal education, for all he had such Scottish realisations invariably, he never once considered himself speaking Scots – it was always English. For him, Scots was what I did when, as a boy, I'd recite ballads or Burns.

The Nine Symposium Questions

The crucial point is that answers to these questions hang on the stance adopted towards languageness, or status as an autonomous linguistic system, for every question depends crucially on the languageness issue.

(A) *What's wrong with current arrangements and practice? What research is needed to show what needs to be done?*

Whether or not the Scottish Executive thinks of Scotland as Scots-speaking, or whether it considers Scots simply to be English, if the Scottish Executive thinks that nothing needs to be done, then it probably thinks current arrangements and practice are fine. But if activism wishes Scots to be promoted either in terms of the European Charter Part II, or even Part III, then the arrangements and practice need to be spelled out. Events have progressed since the 2007 symposium. The Scottish Executive/Government, elected in 2007, created a working group on Scots under the chairmanship of Derrick McClure in 2009.²⁰ The group submitted its first report on 30 November 2010.²¹ For a review of the group's work, see Robinson (2011).

(B) *Is Scots alone sufficient means to ensure its vibrancy and maintenance as a community*

²⁰ see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2009/10/29151643>

²¹ see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/11/25121454/0>

language?

If it is accepted that Scotland is Scots-speaking, then Scots is being maintained as a community language and thereby its vibrancy is confirmed. It's beside the point what qualities the language itself has. Scots is no less sufficient than English or Gaelic or Irish. Where Scots is deficient is in its functionality owing to disuse. If it isn't accepted that Scotland is Scots-speaking, the central questions concern its utilitarian value and the desire by people to benefit from using Scots.

(C) *How far is the sustaining of Scots communities in Scotland and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland conditional on infrastructure, environment, society, employment, urban renewal, culture, or anything else?*

If it is accepted that Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are Scots-speaking, then there is no dependency on such factors as listed, for its communities are being sustained. If it is granted that Scots needs to be promoted, then it will take more than more literature or new dictionaries to ensure community-wide adoption or communicative success. Activism will have to define its goals and its means to achieve them through the Executive and their agencies and through the local authorities, but if, crucially, public opinion could be swung in line, then activism might come to be reinforced in its calls for support from such factors as infrastructure, environment, or employment.

(D) *What is the role of education in the sustaining of a Scots-speaking community – e.g. developing social skills, cultural identity or linguistic confidence?*

I had a good school education in literature in Scots, which was probably the source of my interest in Scots today. As a fresh graduate in the mid-seventies, I joined a group run by Joy Hendry called CASLS (Campaign for the Advancement of Scottish Literature in the Scottish School) for it seemed to me essential that Scottish Literature should be taught in the Scottish school. The success of the campaign may be doubtful – Scottish Literature may now be mainstreamed within a set of other options within English, so that, whereas its presence on the curriculum no longer needs to be campaigned for, it may be easy to ignore it.

Education needs to take a broader approach to contemporary language – not as historical philology, but as sociolinguistics and pragmatics, showing and explaining how language is used in society, to help or occasionally hinder us, how it empowers or manipulates us, and so on, regardless of whether it is in Scots or not.

(E) *How far is the integration of Scots and culture into the community an environmental issue?*

If it is accepted that Scotland is Scots-speaking, then the environmental issue is presumably solved. Just as public life is now smoke-free, with smoking zones part of the innovation, so everyone could be encouraged to speak Scots in situations of public exchanges or service transactions. Although people are probably speaking in Scots anyway, signs could be displayed informing customers or clients that the premises are 'Scots-speaking' or 'Scots colloquial'. It might not change too many people's habits, but there would be the potential for a shift of attitude and perception.

(F) *Is the approach to such questions top-down or bottom-up? Whose task or responsibility is it ultimately to sustain a Scots-speaking community?*

²² See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/01/24130746/0>

In Scotland, since devolution, the former Executive moved slowly; the Dewar strategy of ‘doing nothing’ mentioned above meant that almost all effort was bottom-up. *A Strategy for the Scotland’s Languages*²² published in 2007 was anything but a language strategy (see Kirk 2008); after 2007, there has been some acceleration with an audit, a conference, a working group, and now a report. Meanwhile, a question about Scots in the 2011 Census in Scotland and Northern Ireland has also been agreed.²³

The top-down approach in Scotland seems to be facilitation of bottom-up efforts through the Scots Language organisations, especially Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scots Language Centre, which have received direct funding by the Government since 2009, and others, such as the Scots Language Society, and also in a slow, quiet way, by commercial enterprise producing words in Scots on giftware and business signage (see Hance 2009). In Northern Ireland, the Inter-departmental Charter Implementation Group signals some top-down responsibility and intent.²⁴

(G) *What role can universities and other institutions of higher education play?*

Universities can provide leadership through research and dissemination, although there must first be suitably qualified subject expertise in place, sadly a dwindling resource. Much good would come from an Institute for the Languages of Scotland²⁶ where all questions pertaining to Scots, Gaelic and any other language could be addressed, especially if such an institute were based in a university, with access for research in a range of ways and facilities for dissemination.

(H) *With the arrival in Scotland and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland of significant numbers of speakers of Eastern European languages, how far has the future role and supporting mechanisms for Scots been undermined?*

With recently-arrived Eastern European languages in the Scottish and Irish communities, both the language question and that of need are immediately answered. At a recent church service in Belfast conducted in English, and which I attended, Polish speakers were encouraged to respond in Polish. If there is a case for Scots, that case should not be undermined by immigrants, as that case remains the same. The arrival of new languages has simply made the cake bigger and therefore the needs and demand for provision bigger – especially arising from the employment of immigrants with little or no knowledge of English.

(I) *Where are there communities where minority languages are being successfully sustained? What comparisons may be drawn with Scots, and what lessons are to be learned?*

The closest parallel is with Switzerland (see Fischer 2001 and Eagle in this volume).

(J) *In comparison with Gaelic, where does Scots stand with regard to its being a community language for much of the Scottish population, and what is being or should be done for it? And for Scots speakers in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?*

Happily, Scots is neither in conflict or rivalry with Gaelic (except perhaps for funding). Gaelic wins on the languageness issue; Scots wins on numbers. The large Gaelic-speaking population in Glasgow makes Gaelic a national issue, as the almost country-wide distribution of place-names also shows.²⁵ Not to accept Gaelic as a national issue is tantamount to accepting it purely as a regional language. In Northern Ireland, Scots

²³ <http://www.scotslanguage.com/articles/view/1307>

²⁴ <http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/index/language-cultural-diversity-r08.htm>

²⁵ For the feasibility study into an institute, see <http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/celtscot/institutelanguagesscotland/>

has become politically linked with Irish. Regardless of functional or utilitarian merits, equal rather than equitable treatment for Scots is urged by its activists. Because of this focus, arguments about Scots in Northern Ireland tend not to link with Scots in Scotland, to the detriment of both, despite the ancestry and shared dialect status. It is as if Scots in Northern Ireland matters more as a badge of identity against Irish than the kin-tongue connection.

As Mari FitzDuff (2000) reminds us, language is always used in politics to sort something else out. Spolsky (2006) makes the same point by arguing that language policy functions in an ecological relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic factors ... i.e. it serves as a surrogate political issue of another ideological agenda, i.e. to sort something else out ... so language choice in the Scottish Civil Service may be considered as a question of Scottishness vs. Britishness. Categorising Scots as English and refusing support is no doubt connected to an all-British agenda; recasting Scots as a language and providing support goes hand in glove with a Scottish nationalist agenda. Paradoxically, providing support for Scots in Northern Ireland and building on the European Charter's designation as a language under its own name let unionists feel more secure within all-British agenda; at the same time, Ulster nationalists may feel that bit closer to repartition and their own brand of nationalism within an independent Ulster state. Whatever one's view of Scotland and Northern Ireland as Scots-speaking communities, there are serious costs and implications either way.

Because of these conflicting views, it is hardly surprising that there is no language policy for Scots. For there to be a language policy, according to Bernard Spolsky, three factors have to be operating in coherently and cohesively: practice, management, and beliefs (or ideology). As I've indicated, beliefs and ideology thrive in abundance, but they are only operationalised in a limited way through literary writing²⁷ or experimentation in other written registers. Literary endeavours do not require a language policy, however, and, as Lo Bianco has argued, no policy is also a policy.

Any state management with regard to Scots has been conspicuous by its absence. With a national Government now in power, there appears rapidly to be a sea-change afloat, which might, at last, lead to some kind of policy. The preparation for such a policy can build on years of research, reflection and commentary by the likes of Derrick McClure, the working group's chairman. The Government can take forward initiatives such as the proposal for a Languages Institute, and it can continue to encourage literary expression and study. To be a general language policy, however, the preparation needs to connect with the changing attitudes towards Scottishness and nationalism, to show to the people of Scotland the fact that the strongest and most abiding sense of Scottish identity is through its native tongue – Scots – and to assess the appetite and demand for full-scale revival or for something less. The actors in *The Bevellers* showed just how much an awareness of Scots is needed, let alone a sense of respect and pride. If the way forward for Scotland as a Scots-speaking community is to be sustained, we welcome the working group's report for it provides what is currently the best opportunity for a policy to be formulated and then implemented for the whole nation. With such a report, for once, Scots may be learning from Gaelic.

²⁶ MacCaluim (2007) shows just how widespread throughout Scotland Gaelic is spoken.

²⁷ In, for instance, *Lallans*, the Scots Language Society's magazine, where successive style sheets have been adopted with the intention of managing the language and influencing practice, mostly at an orthographical level. By contrast, in an anthology of short stories such as *A Tongue in Yer Heid*, compiled by James Robertson, there is a wide variety of spellings, from the traditional literary to the urban demotic.

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