Language, Identity and Civic Participation amongst Gaelic-speaking adolescents

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Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig

28.08.18

Structure of the presentation

* Theoretical frame: education and language planning
* Why this study?
* Sample & methodological approach
* Findings:
  * Set 1: Gaelic-speaking young people and civic participation
  * Set 2: Gaelic-speaking young people and future language use
* Implications for language policy and planning
* Questions

Education and language planning

* Hinton (2011: 309) argues the roles of minority language education to be:

Overall Goal	To save an endangered language from extinction by increasing speaker numbers & usage
Anticipated pupil characteristics	• sense of identity/belonging to a minority culture • political stance about cultural and linguistic position of minority group
Anticipated relationship of pupil to language in adulthood	• transmit the language to future generations (IGT, choice of immersion education) • use of language in social and work contexts (building language use communities)

Scottish context

* Scottish Government, Consultation Paper on Gaelic-medium Education Bill:

  "Gaelic medium education can make an important contribution to [securing the future of Gaelic in Scotland] both in terms of young people's language learning but also in terms of the effects this can have on language use in home, community and work- place."

  (2014: 3)

❖ Bòrd na Gàidhlig (2017, p.25) echo these sentiments in relation to both Gaelic-medium and Gaelic-learners education, and emphasise partnership working between the home, school, community organisations and workplace.

Why this research?

- However, there remain gaps in our knowledge as to how well these goals are being fulfilled within the Scottish context.
  (**Primary & early secondary:** Will 2012, O'Hanlon 2012, NicLeòid, 2014, Smith-Christmas, 2016.
  Mid to upper secondary: MacNeil & Stradling 2000, Oliver 2002, Muller 2005, Morrison 2006, Cochrane 2008).

* Key study: Dunmore (2015) study of first-generation of GME educated pupils

	Sample (Survey, n =130; Interviews, n = 46)
Cultural identification	Gaelic was important to personal cultural identity, but very few felt ethno-cultural link.
Political stance	Language use or support for GME rarely related to language maintenance or activism.
Intergenerational transmission	Weak amongst the 20% of the sample with children. Others wished to speak Gaelic to future children, but didn't use Gaelic much in the home.
Language use	High language use: 10 of 46 interviewees. Intermediate use: 12 of 46 interviewees. Low language use: 24 of 46 interviewees.

The sample

* Seven case-study areas selected on basis of:
  * Sociolinguistic profile of local community (3x high, 4x low)
  * Gaelic-medium provision at secondary school
  * Existence of youth activities in Gaelic in the area
  * Size of Gaelic-medium pupil cohort relative to total cohort

Sampling for heterogeneity
(Cook & Campbell, 1979; Gomm et al. 2000)

* Gaelic teachers
* S3-S6 pupils (aged 14 to 18)
  * Gaelic-medium pupils (n = 45)
  * Gaelic learner pupils (n = 21)

|	At least 1 parent fluent or fairly fluent	Some parental Gaelic competence (at least 1 parent)	No parental Gaelic competence (either parent)
Gaelic-medium	22 (49%)	12 (27%)	11 (24%)

The activities

* Three main activities over three weeks:
  * Timetable task
  * Language questionnaire
  * Identities, civic participation and the future - interview

Exploring the social lives and perspectives of the **young people.**

Spolsky (2004, p.1) warns that studies looking at the 'social life of language' are often 'too-language centred.'
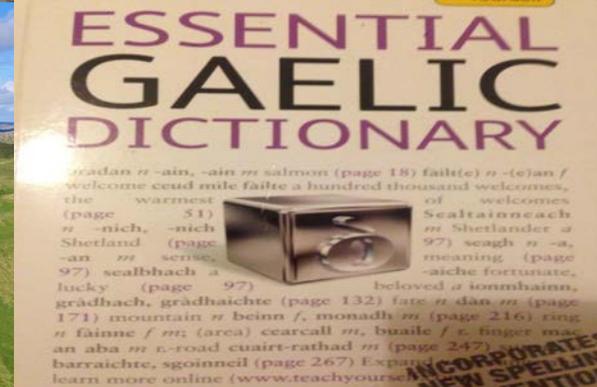
Today

* **Set 1: Gaelic-speaking young people and civic participation**
  * Starting from the perspective of civic participation
  * Exploring whether language has an influence
  * Links to Hinton's (2011) outcomes of culture and political stance to position of minority group

* **Set 2: Gaelic-speaking young people and future language use**
  * Starting from the perspective of language
  * Exploring anticipated future language use
  * Links to Hinton's (2011) outcomes of language transmission and language use in social and work contexts

The character of civic engagement among adolescents

* Moral: relationship to others
* Social identity:
  * cognitive schemas through identification with social groups
  * schemas based on social representations: symbols and shared meanings

Analogies between language and civic engagement among adolescents

* Sources of language are like sources of civic engagement:
  * Family
  * School
  * Youth organisations
  * Wider community
* Language, too, implies identification with social groups
* Language, too, induces identification through symbols

Hence research questions

* Does Gaelic affect the opportunities for adolescents' civic engagement?
    * Gaelic in the school
    * Gaelic outside the school

* Does Gaelic mediate the effects of community on young people's civic engagement?

* Does having capacity in a minority language induce adolescents to be engaged with the community?

Types of civic engagement

* In the community

* In the school

* Through paid work

* Through online social media

Gaelic civic engagement

* Every respondent who engaged in volunteering that involved Gaelic was in Gaelic-medium education

* Nearly all expressed some kind of Gaelic identity

Gaelic civic engagement: community

'I helped with the Gaelic Fèis in primary school on a Saturday and we did everything in Gaelic there, workshops and other things'.

[Gaelic medium; urban area]

'Chuidich mi leis mar Fèis Ghàidhlig leis a' bhun-sgoil mar air Disathairne is rinn sinn a h-uile rud ann an Gàidhlig an sin, mar workshops is eile.'

Gaelic civic engagement: school

For European languages week: 'we made some [posters] in Gaelic so we were speaking about that. We also made comparisons between Gaelic and French.'

[Gaelic medium; urban area]

'Bha sinn a' dèanamh posters airson European languages week no rudeigin agus bha sinn a' dèanamh cuid dha ann an Gàidhlig so bha sinn a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn. Cuideachd tha sinn a' dèanamh mar comparisons eadar mar Fraingis agus Gàidhlig.'

Gaelic civic engagement: paid work

On working in a restaurant: 'one of the days there was someone there at the weekend who had Gaelic so I spoke to him in Gaelic as well.'

[Gaelic medium; urban area]

'Aon de na làithean bha cuideigin ann aig an robh Gàidhlig aig deireadh seachdain san taigh-òsta so bha mi a' bruidhinn ris anns a' Ghàidhlig cuideachd.'

Gaelic civic engagement: online

'I also write a little in Gaelic when I send an e-mail to a man … [who] is compiling a book of Gaelic stories and when I send him my stories I am speaking in Gaelic.'

[Gaelic medium; urban area]

'Tha mi cuideachd a' sgrìobhadh beagan sa Ghàidhlig nuair a tha mi a' cur post-d gu duine … tha e a' dèanamh e-leabhar le sgeulachdan Gàidhlig agus nuair a tha mi a' cur na sgeulachdan agam thuige bidh mi a' bruidhinn dha sa Ghàidhlig.'

Civic engagement: community
Gaelic not mentioned

Project 'to record old photos from people and they came to the school to talk about them and we were doing an MP3 recording of that. And they put it up on a website.

  [Gaelic medium; high local incidence]

'Bha e mar record sean photos a bha aig daoine agus bidh iad a' tighinn a-steach dhan sgoil agus a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn is bidh sinn a' dèanamh recording air am mp3 de sin. Agus chuir sinn suas e làrach-lìn.'

Civic engagement: school
Gaelic not prominent even when mentioned

Teaches accordion, in 'a club for pupils in the primary school' where the respondent used to volunteer in the 'youth club … that's open to pupils in the Gaelic class and the English class' but still volunteers at Sradagan (Gaelic youth group).

[Gaelic medium; high local incidence]

'B' àbhaist a bhith a' cuideachadh an youth club air oidhche Diciadain thall ann am Bun-sgoil [x] - 's e fear caran fosgailte gu sgoilearan anns a' chlas Gàidhlig agus anns a' chlas Beurla. Ach bidh mi cuideachd a' cuideachadh aig Sradagan.

Gaelic civic engagement: general

Engaged socially with Gaelic because it was part of the context.

Gaelic was not mostly the reason for the engagement.

Future language use

* Transmission (Gaelic-medium: 40 pupils)

	Yes			Maybe		No
	IGT and school	IGT only	School only	IGT and school	School only	Neither IGT or school
Gaelic-medium	23	10	2	5	-	-
Total:	35			5		0

Future Language use

* Future use – will you still be speaking Gaelic in five years time do you think? (Gaelic-medium: 45 pupils)

	Gaelic-medium	Total:
Unsure	19	19 (42%)
Further study/work	11	11 (25%)
Friends/family	7	
Place	6	15 (33%)
Hobbies	2	

Work

Social/ Community

Summary of future language use

* A larger proportion of our respondents intend to transmit and use Gaelic in adulthood than Dunmore (2015) found to be the case in adulthood.

* Need to support Opportunity & Capacity (Grin, 2003)

* 33 of 45 Gaelic-medium pupils reported that they would like to speak Gaelic more often

* Many reported lacking competence or confidence in speaking Gaelic socially

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2018-2023

BÒRD NA GÀIDHLIG

Focus on:

* Young people
  * Pathways to work
  * Use of Gaelic in communities and homes (especially in urban areas)
  * Activities and sports
  * Digital platforms and content

Conclusions

* Our study provides data from an under-researched cohort in Gaelic-language policy and planning: Gaelic-speaking adolescents.

* The findings have shown young people to be civically engaged, but not to link such engagement with Gaelic-speaking or with a commitment to activism.

* Young people's intentions on transmission of the language and future use show a desire to continue to use and to transmit Gaelic in the future.

* The study highlights some potential barriers to such a goal, and some opportunities to support Gaelic-speaking adolescents.

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